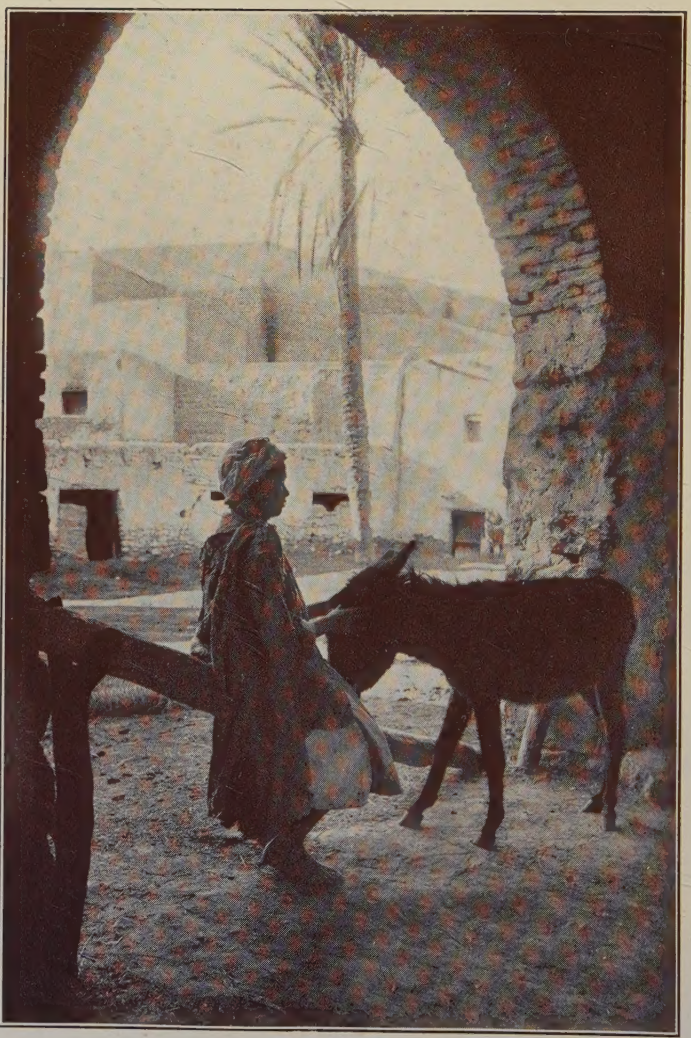
DESERT WINDS

HAFSA



FRIENDS

Desert Winds

by

HAFSA

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A DISTINGUISHED FRIEND OF EASTERN PEOPLES

THOMAS CHARLES PERKINS

FOR HIS UNFAILING INTEREST AND ADVICE

FOREWORD

This is not a travel book, in the common sense of the word; but it is an ideal book for the traveler. Foreign lands, especially Oriental lands, are represented to the modern tourist as places of mystery, of quaint charm, and of exotic color. Northern Africa is a meeting-place of East and West, of diverse races, faiths, and manners. But none of these are more peculiar than those of Main Street. The essentials are simply human; and he is the true traveler, he only penetrates the so-called mystery of the East, who finds there his fellow-man.

In "Desert Winds" the author has chosen to describe one trip in Algeria; a trip undertaken without hazardous or strange experiences, and along a route that is becoming increasingly accessible. Yet this country presents a wonderfully varied scene of contrasting peoples and places. Perhaps not the least of its incongruities or tragedies is to be recognized in the present conflict of modern and ancient cultures. And under these conditions, every work that gives without sentimentality or patronage a true picture of these people as they are, in them-

selves, has permanent value; and such works are all too rare.

This book is an interpretation of still living aspects of that great Arab-Islamic culture that blossomed between Asia and Europe throughout the Middle Ages, and to which European civilisation is in so many ways so deeply indebted.

Hafsa is an American citizen of distinguished Arab and Spanish descent. Here perhaps lies the explanation of the gift of sympathetic understanding which is so strikingly revealed in Desert Winds. One who writes of her own kith and kin is not disturbed by the curiosity that moves the ordinary traveler, and provokes his observations; her task is not the investigation of strange customs, but the exposition of a point of view that is as natural and acceptable to her as it is to those of whom she writes.

Hafsa's book has a background of scholarship adequate to guarantee its presentation of facts. But it is more than a description: it is an interpretation of life, as molded and unified by that great natural force, the Desert.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY.

August 1, 1927

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DESERT WINDS

DESERT WINDS

CHAPTER ONE

El Jazáyer *

Above the blue waters of the Mediterranean the old Turkish citadel huddles on its promontory—like an aged hawk, molting and motionless. The sea no longer brings it treasure or trove; yet still it watches for the sails of old ships, not knowing that they are no more. It is lifeless, or living only for its dimmed vision of the unchanging sea, into which its talons no longer grasp.

The gleamingly white terraced roofs of old Algiers sprawl down the sides of the hill, hardened with the clay of a hundred generations; and beyond is the vigorous growth of the newer city. But the venerable town is blanched as the core of an old tree, standing only in the dead semblance of existence, fastened to its height by sclerotic tendrils, its purpose and significance slowly receding with the years. Remnant humanity clings to its withering stem

* El Jazáyer: "The Islands"; original Arabic name for Algiers.

of life. Proud races have come to it with their schemes and aspirations, have survived the hour, and then have subsided with the glamour of its picturesque history. The cloudless limpid sky, which in times gone by may have seemed to haughty deys but an appropriate canopy, still smiles down with its eternal youthfulness; and the Mediterranean is the same shimmering enchantress as when the Kasba* thought to hold her in bondage. The breeze ruffling the waters of peacock blue brushes the hoary walls of the ancient fortress, yet stirs no silken banner, nor pasha's princely cloak. It only whirls up puffs of yellow dust that sifts over the odd wares spread on the ground by vagrant merchants, over the rude tools of squatting barbers, and settles fine grit on chess-boards balanced between the knees of solemn graybeard Moors.

At the top of a stairwayed street the rising stench, the stale pungency of crowded living, is dissolved and blown away. Worn steps lead down beneath blackened beams and beetling masonry, through dank archways, to the stifled heart of the aged city, to burrowing lanes tortuous as decaying arteries. Thence rises the babble of a thousand tongues; there, over stained stones, tread the many races of the Levant.

Up and down these narrow streets of sagging

*Kasba: the name of the Turkish fortress; now applied to the old town.

cobbled steps—sometimes curving around limy abutments, sometimes listing as they curve—and through the pellucid blue shadows where projecting walls of old houses meet overhead, weaves the living network of the Kasba: burnúsed Moors and Berbers, fezzed Turks, pallid Israelites peering furtively from side to side. Women closely veiled, and wrapped chrysalis-like in soft voluminous white, move formlessly along, revealing only their lustrous dark eyes. Perhaps a French officer—now and then saluted by Senegalese infantrymen—traverses without sentiment, without notice the color-lurking gloom of tunneled byways; and, even more apart, stern-visaged men of the desert stride by with swinging step. Among these pageant peoples, passing and repassing between smothering walls, donkeys thread their way, laden with panniers dripping refuse and tolling swarms of flies; full-uddered goats are milked before doorways and clatter on.

Sometimes, where the life-infested streets are open to the sky, a party of tourists may stop to admire an ancient nail-studded door in a Moorish arch of carved stone, or an intricately wrought window grille high up on the wall—illumined, perchance, by a splash of sunshine, and casting a pretty lace of tinted shadows on the graying plaster. Often before their guide has ended his roted harangue, an Arabized Kabyle, with a roll of native rugs on his

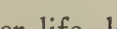
shoulder, has intruded with a tray of cheap jewelry and souvenirs, and begun the jargon of his trade.

Clear, soft sunshine streams upon a roadway, brightening creamy mantles into folds of white and radiant yellow. No particles of dust trace this golden path of light; and yet it is glamorously suspended as on the breath of dank walls, moist streets, and winding channels of humanity.

And in one street there is a double row of faded blue houses, where women gaudy as parrakeets and of many races and cross-breeds flit along or whisper and beckon from curtained doorways. And everywhere, slipping through the crowds, are the scantily clad children of the Kasba—many piteously racked by disease. One of these ragged gamins may take you in charge, discover for you all sorts of weird corners and culs-de-sac, all the while keeping up a garbled tale of legend and adventure. Blind beggars walk slowly, heads erect. Led by children or alone, they grope their way with staffs to recessed doorways, there to reach out to passers-by, and evoke Alláh's blessing on the giver of alms.

In the Kasba there is no native language except the long-forgotten runes scrawled on the hillside by countless crannied streets, no representative citizens save, perhaps, a few bundled forms with curiously blinking eyes, past the age of racial recognition. But with unending color and variety its people

climb the hilly paths, patter down uneven steps, and permeate the thousand cobbled alleys. They seem busy, yet aimless; intent and searching, yet without reward—in this dried honeycomb like a sieve that has caught the sediment of life. And from each reeking roadway of El Jazáyer rises the heavy scent of musk, aloes, and acrid oils, the odor as of burnt spices; the very flavor of its soul.



But there is another life, less known, and apart. On the flat roofs of the Kasba, away from the sordid traffic of the streets, the women live out their lives, knowing little, nor caring to know, of any other world. Here is no air of mystery, of shrouding drapery and veils; the women, clad in sunny iridescent hues, patter back and forth, busy with domestic tasks, or cross from roof to roof to visit with their friends. In this sequestered city, each parapeted housetop, rich or poor, is a companion to its neighbor.

Here and there are vine-sheltered corners or vivid awnings. In the open sweep of sunshine, brass and copper utensils flare and potted geraniums glow in clusters of pink and scarlet. Clothes-lines flaunt bright arrays of garments. Old women lean against the parapets and exchange whispered gossip; small children romp and play, with perhaps a puppy barking at their heels; and little maidens are busy, pa-

tiently learning to sew. A mother sits cuddling her infant to her round young breast, bends tenderly above the babe to shield it from the sun, and, softly crooning, sways gently to and fro.

No male member of the family intrudes during the daytime. But in the dusk of evening the men join their families beneath the soft-starred sky; for a while the lingering notes of a flute or perhaps a pattering of drums blends with their talk and laughter.

Yet the beauty of these housetops seems merely the accident of custom and utility. These mingled peoples preserve—but contribute nothing to—the Eastern mode of living; a simple life settled in the mold of antiquity, opening its inner being only to the heavens, and strange only by reason of its seclusion. But in this aspect of their lives, if in no other, the people of El Jazáyer refute its squalor.

And in years to come, when old barriers shall have been broken down only to be replaced by new limitations, old problems solved only to induce many fresh perplexities, then this may be recalled as a happy balance of life; or, perhaps, only as a mysterious existence, strange and unreal.

On the edge of the Kasba, and yet not of it, is an Indian bazaar with plate-glass windows and displays to catch the Western eye. But inside, all is quiet, with

IN THE KASBA

Narrow streets of sagging, cobbled steps, sometimes curving around limy abutments, sometimes listing as they curve

an easy grace of buying and selling. Here are spangled scarfs, silks, rugs, and other wondrous stuffs, scented woods, and cases full of Eastern jewelry—pearls, coral, turquoise, opals, and little "hands" of Fátima, set with gems.

There may be a day when you are lost in the shadowed sanctuary of the upper story, when the noon hour comes and you are still held by the magic of the bazaar, still unable to leave these rich presents from the Orient. And perhaps, of a sudden, a brown-robed figure appears, burdened with baskets of *kus-kus** and spiced sweets, and, with a delighted grin, places before you many aromatic foods. You are left alone. You taste each dish, you taste again—and you are warmly sated. Then over your hands and into a wide-lipped bowl scented water is poured from a brass ewer, slender and finely scrolled.

A courteous proprietor offers cigarettes of exotic fragrance; and when you have seen every wonder of the shop, he shows you, perchance, even his most precious personal possessions. . . . Time-treasured, gleaming jewels! A silken sari,—a long strip of airy fabric, glowing and shimmering, sprinkled wtih embroidered flowers and richly bordered,—once the wedding garment of an Indian bride. And when you leave the bazaar, you have been enriched by a

* *Kus-kus:* the national dish of Algeria, composed of prepared grain, chicken, and spices.

glimpse of the goodness and the unaged beautiful living of the East.

Passing through the portal of a massive cedar gate grooved with age, the bright-robed rivulet of the Kasba pierces a panel of sheer sunshine flaming across from the narrow mouth of an alley, and flows down the cobbled slope of a market street, meandering past little deltas of fruits and vegetables, copper and brass spreading out unevenly from the doorways of the shops. As they stream through this shining panel athwart the entrance of the street, sallow faces glow ruddy and radiant, colors sparkle. Rich red cloaks shimmer into whitish pink; ripe fruits are transfigured globes of fire; even the discolored roadway crosses a painted path. And as if carried past this portal by the crowd, color lights the length of the market. Streaks of sunshine cut across the street and over moldering ochered walls; shadows are glamorous blue or green or dusky purple. Alcoves smolder with many-toned reflections, corners glimmer with misty pools of light; beneath a tiny balcony, the ashen wall flickers like opal. And in full brilliance old buildings are drenched with color, like sea rocks dried in the sun.

In the open streets are heaps of tomatoes, pumpkins, red and green peppers. Venders pile baskets of citrus fruits, figs, and trays of dates—luscious

baubles of translucent amber. Among these islands, and enhancing their colors, moves the stream of creamy white *baránis*,* varied here and there by a Berber's yellow head-dress, the shiny black face of a Nubian, a Jewess's velvets and silks, or the red tassels of a sleepy donkey. Baskets of shimmering fish cast cool gleams up into swarthy hooded faces. A rude crate of squawking fowls, on the shoulder of a porter, adds a flurry of feathers. And here, as everywhere in the Kasba, the air is laden with spice and perfume, the cloying odors from sweet shops, the smell of living creatures.

In a strip of shade by the walls, the teeming colors are ragged, disheveled, dirty, yet richly over-toned. The pale face of an infant carried on its mother's back becomes a little pool of dancing colors. Patched grain-sacks worn by gaunt-legged, bearded men, and brown *gandurahs* are filmed with faint green or purple. From the bright roadway, a broken jar still holding a bit of water flickers up a pallid spatter of sunshine under a painted window balcony. And women's figures draped in white move in the shade like rippling blue mirrors of the sky.

Before the brown-shadowed doorway of a shop—the rude doors flung wide, showing patchy daubs of scaling paint—a bevy of housewives finger the color-heap of garments, or reach for gaudy silks

* *Baránis:* plural for *burnús,* a cowled cloak.

hanging by the doors with other merchandise of every hue. In the doorways of these little shops, M'zabite merchants bow gravely to those who enter, or conduct them within to be served by young assistants. Across the way, a hybrid Turk, outwardly simulating the European, squats on a door-sill, surrounded by his goods and an eddy of appraising customers. Here are bartered bright yellow and red *bábúshes** worked with silver or gold, leathern pouches cunningly tooled, and Algerian belts of red leather. In other streets, whole carcasses, quarters of meat, and plucked fowls hang before meat shops. Tarnished cooking-utensils and huge trays of copper or brass gild merchant and passer-by with a metallic sheen.

Outside somber cubical little rooms open wide to the street; and in the fumid gloom within, robed figures squat, playing at chess, sipping coffee and smoking. A glow of charcoal reflects on shadowed faces, a blue-tiled wall gleams softly near the fire, and in a far corner the white *hlafa* and mellow bronze skin of a patriarchal *shaikh* are dimmed; his flowing, bright-hued baránis merge in a blur of rich tones. A few voices murmur; perhaps a musician chants a tale of love or war. The air is pungent with boiling coffee, thick with the smoke of kaif pipes and cigarettes.

* *Bábúshes:* Arab slippers for outdoor wear.

These *cafés maures* are seen on nearly every street, and here the composite life of the Kasba has its rendezvous; a drowsy rendezvous, an effortless submergence. Many of the picturesque clientele may be of the same trade, and some have no other home. Yet, fettered by a common mood of reverie, they sit detached as strangers. Fingering rosaries in the folds of their robes, they fix their gaze beyond the drifting pageantry before them. The very atmosphere they breathe is a narcotic; they are preoccupied, yet thoughtless, as if drugged into empty abstraction.

Wave upon wave of magic color passes by the idlers of the café maure—color that would light a world of poetry and dreams. But the listless spirit of El Jazáyer huddles farther in the murky shadows, forgetful of its many conquerors, unmindful of the centuries-old oscillation between pomp and decadence. It is indifferent even to the fate of its present peoples, smothering in their own amalgamation, ignorant of what might have been, and unconcerned with what yet may be.

Old Algiers has housed a dozen races and survived their rule, has been a strategic tenancy of half as many empires; it is almost as old in human history as the sea of three continents which it surveys. During its long life it has watched the commerce of the world sail by; once it controlled this commerce, taxed

or captured each ship. It has been the outpost of a polyglot East, it has been an independent metropolis of North Africa, and now it is dwarfed by the new city of a mercantile West.

Yet, in the twenty centuries and more of its history, it has never clearly represented a single race, nation, or empire. It has always been just a city of the Mediterranean. To-day, the varied ancestry of its peoples is more muddled than ever: they have forgotten their origin, and from Algiers they have acquired no precedent except of constant mingling and reassortment, constant flux and change. They have had no common tradition except the entangled history of the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER TWO

An Episode in the Kasba

WHILE strolling through the Kasba, one gloriously perfect morning of early winter, I paused near a wall fountain in a shadowed corner where men and veiled women were filling jugs and copper vessels with clear water and bearing them away on head or shoulder. In their unhurried movements was the rhythm of poetry; each flowing fold of their concealing robes so alike, yet revealing new outlines —like curling waves of the sea, harmoniously blent from one smooth color, yet showing a thousand changing tones and shadows. A dog quenched its thirst from a spilled puddle. A little boy with sightless eyes fumbled to fill a tin cup; an old woman, shriveled and unveiled, took it from him, and when the cup was full, held it to his lips. And drinking, he clasped both hands around it with an infant's gesture.

Presently I came to an open conjunction of little streets where are huddled heterogeneous bazaars. I started to enter a tiny brass shop, when suddenly—

Out of one of the darkened miniature streets came a young Arab. Slight, sinewy frame, bronzed skin, aquiline nose, sparkling eyes beneath straight dark brows—scarce was he grown to manhood. From head to bare brown legs he was clothed in snowy raiment. Every movement was swift and eager, molding his baránis about him with swirling grace. He paused and looked around, as though in each sight he found novelty and fascination. Against the background of shadowy shops, the sun focused him in a pool of vibrant light; radiant with youthful vitality, he seemed a harbinger from a cleaner, freer world. For an instant the attention of the motley throng was fixed upon him; and before they went again their many ways, tight lips had smiled, withered faces glowed, cynical eyes had softened. In another moment a swarm of tattered urchins turned the corner and engulfed the youth, reached grimy little hands out and caught at him, looked up into his face with rapt, imploring eyes filled with expectancy. He smiled down at them with a wide affectionate grin that parted his thin curved lips, lifted them at the corners, and disclosed his strong white teeth. Then, slowly, tantalizingly, with slim brown hands he put a reed flute in his mouth, and, piping a haunting, merry tune as the gleeful children danced about him, he turned a corner and disappeared.

Entering the brass shop, I passed the merchant, a venerable Arab, standing by the doorway. He too had been watching, and as he followed me in I heard him murmur, "*Aï*, it is youth and the call of youth!"

The little shop was in twilight dimness, save here and there a glinting of old brass. Undisturbed by other customers, I lingered long over my small purchases, the old merchant silently waiting for me to make my selections. When at last I had gathered them together and set them on a table, he computed their cost, and wrapped them in an awkward parcel. Then, quite, quite unhurried,—although it neared the noon hour when he would repair to the mosque for midday worship,—he placed a stool, silver-scrolled and ivory-inlaid, for me to be seated. As is still the dignified custom with many Eastern merchants at the conclusion of business, with a host's courtesy he brought a pot of sweet black coffee, creamy with the foam of its boiling, and poured it for us into tiny cups contained in outer cups of brass.

He sat down cross-legged on a rug beside a low table on which was a little spray of flowers in a vase. Picking them up, he inhaled their fragrance for a moment, then handed them to me, a kindly smile lighting his aged face. Then, his dark eyes seeing far beyond the narrow confines of his little shop, he said:

"My daughter, you have come from afar; I know not whence, but neither of us belongs here. My heart grows old, and my strength is feeble, but as I draw nearer Alláh the Merciful, I recall long-forgotten things, and remember the days of my youth. I am wearied now of strange ways and much noise, and I long for the place whence I came. There the roses will soon be in bloom; their perfume will smite the nostrils and their beauty refresh the eye. Know you a place where roses grow beneath the shade of palms? . . . where little streams water the gardens and the sky stoops to caress the earth that stretches out to meet it? Alláh the Beneficent planted gardens for His people in seas of sand . . . scattered them over the desert, that men and their animals might find refuge and sustenance at the end of long journeying. The gardens are sometimes far apart, that there may be no crowding, but within the march of men and camels. And at night, sure stars are lighted in the heavens to guide them on their way. My daughter, Youth seeks new ways and forgets its heritage. I have tarried late, but, by the will of Alláh, I will once more return, there to end my days."

Lest I interrupt his words of reverie, I had listened immobile to the gentle voice of the old man. And, looking out into the crowded little street, I tried to visualize the picture he had drawn. It was

a vision afar, almost impossible to conjure. Yet, after a glimpse of the youth whom children followed,—one of his own race, about whom clung the intangible presence of the desert, marking him apart from his kinsmen, the Moors of the city,—the old man's memory had reached back across the years. Perhaps the young man was seeing all these things for the first time, his vision distorted by the glamour of adventure, stimulated and excited by his first contact with an alien world which welcomed him as eagerly as it would a refreshing breeze after still, hot days. Would he heed the words of an old man, perhaps once as full of hopes, who had spent his years and found in the end the fallacy of his dreams? . . . An old man grown wise and sad and filled with a great yearning to go back among his own kind, that death might find him there where roses would soon be in bloom, where the stars are lighted to guide those who wander home again; where men give thanks to a benign Alláh for the water that makes fertile little patches in a great land of waste, and for every simple blessing of their daily lives!

Now the old one had come to know the pathos of every crooked little street in the ancient Kasba, where empires have left their tragic imprints; where pirate chiefs once came in proud triumph with their captives and pillaged riches; and where, now, mangy donkeys stumble along burdened with loads of filth,

and scrawny cats wrangle and spit at stray mongrels; where a wretched, pathetic humanity of hybrid races is crowded behind the still-beautiful old doors which once opened on inner pools of light, tiled courts gay with flowers and the cool splash and trickle of water in sunken fountains! And in one tiny corner of El Jazáyer was an old man longing to be again in the oasis of his childhood.

I, too, longed to be away, far away; to be again in the desert and among his people, the Moghrá-riba, Arabs of the West. I turned to ask where his home had been, to ask if I could go there. But before I could speak, as though interpreting my thoughts he continued:

"You cannot come to know my people here. You cannot come to know my people in this rusted crucible. We know not how to use the customs of other races. Our souls corrode in trying to attune our lives to theirs. We are smothered as by a great darkness, that steals upon us unawares. Alláh the All-Wise willed not our footsteps to mingle. For me, so full of years, my heart knows shame; and for my people likewise, who have been over-long in learning what was from the first ordained.

"*Aï*, daughter," he sighed, "would you come to know us, go beyond the mountains for many days' journey; go alone among my people,—without prejudice, as you would among your own,—and

knowledge will surely come of its own accord. But heed you: travel slowly, that they may know you for a friend. Nor deem to open doors with aught but friendly mien. We are a proud people, and like to render hospitality, unasked. Go with a heart filled with good-will, and Alláh will surely guide you to such things as your perception warrants. That and no more. And when you meet my people at the cross-roads, may you break the bread of understanding; in your hearts may there be distilled the precious attar of friendship! May Alláh bless you, my daughter; we meet, perhaps, not again! *Ma 'assalama!*"

Slowly he rolled down the shutters of his shop and we went each a different way along the sordid little street. Yet it was made colorful and beautiful by the warm bright sun. And as I walked away, I heard, above the din of traffic from the newer city beyond, the muffled call to noon prayer, from the minaret of the near-by mosque.

CHAPTER THREE

Impressions of the Coast and Algiers

All along the wave-fringed coast of North Africa, fraught with the inexhaustible beauty of old towns, sea cliffs, mountain passes, and a manifold country-side, are the freshness and vitality of growing crops, orchards and virgin forests, and the vigor of busy, enterprising colonists. There are Roman ruins, there are cities that remember well the Arab conquest and the heroic resistance led by 'Abdu 'l-Qádir against the French invasion. In the mountains there are Berbers little improved by time. And all embellished a bit by a common and newly acquired provincialism. Throughout this coast marked by footsteps crisscrossed in the dust of intermingled civilizations, and even across the mountains to the less trammeled oases of the interior, runs a network of splendidly constructed modern roads—the "best routes" for tourists, spectators in search of newer and more convincing specters. Dominated by the Mediterranean and its peoples past and present, this is a playground of unending variety for the visitors

of to-day—the little strip of Africa familiar to the ancients.

With its matchless climate, its scenic beauty and grandeur, its fertility, and the clear radiance of an unsullied sun, this border along the midland sea has been from earliest legend the guileless and enticing masquerade of a majestic continent of darkness. Fringing the sources of civilization, Africa itself has been more mysterious, more explored, and more imagined than any other great dominion of imperial Nature. It seemed dark and enigmatical to the ancients—perhaps even more a region of awesome mystery than the then unbounded Atlantic. And this Atlantic was crossed and recrossed, a New World discovered, explored, and settled, while Africa was still the fabled home of the unicorn and other chimeric creatures. Even now it is known as a land of two huge wildernesses, the desert and the jungle; a land of gold, diamonds, ivory, precious things of to-day and of thousands of years ago, of slaves and centuries of wild stories of the slave-traffic.

In structure it is a young land of giant lakes, waterways, and waterfalls, of imagined underground rivers even more prodigious. Still, it harbors the vestiges of a most ancient civilization, the aged chronicle of mystic Egypt, and living relics of primitive mankind. It bears evidence of the eonic variation of its endlessly varied climate—not only in massive

geologic changes, but even in rudely scratched figures of jungle animals in places now barren and arid. This colossal cornucopia, a world in itself, points impassively at the nadir of the southern hemisphere's oceanic dome. For centuries it dared circumnavigation; for centuries it was a land of sailors' yarns, and picturesque explorers with a thousand weird tales of giants and pygmies, and even stranger things.

This is dark Africa, so intensely illumined by the perfect sunshine of the northern coast, the unmitigated, blazing fury of the desert sun, and the torrid flood of tropical sunlight—where alone the sun is equaled in energy by the dense swelter of jungle, choking back light from the moist, black, crawling heart of Africa. Here the dwarfed stature of man and his short, unavailing epoch are lost in the ponderous might of an unharnessed continent.

Necessarily, the North-African coast, adorned by its pretty, rippling Mediterranean, is pervaded by an inescapable sense of this great land beyond the snowcapped Atlas Mountains, beyond the meager limit of Greek mythology. There is the call of the desert, a more intangibly alluring sea. But the subtle magnetic attraction of the desert is due not only to its own beauty and mystery, but to the knowledge that even beyond the desert is the vast, sullen, magnificent wilderness of Africa itself.

There are parts of the coast, however, where the atmosphere is intensely local and individual, where the sweep of conquest, piracy, and adventure has been caught in eddies apart from the panorama of the Mediterranean's southern shores and their drama of history. The most picturesque of these spots is Bougie, now dwindled to a seventh of its former size: a trading-post of the Phenicians; a Carthaginian seaport then called Saldæ; a harbor equipped with Roman quays and then captured by the Vandals; a city of culture and learning under the Saracens; the capital of an independent Berber state; a seaport of the Spanish; a pirate stronghold of Levantine adventurers and Turks. . . .

But this most attractive sea town of North Africa is off the main tourist route from Algiers to Constantine, or Biskra. Leaving the open country-side, the *route nationale* winds through the hills,—where, outside native villages, are olive presses with great heaps of the crushed fruit, rotting and rancid,—then soars up into the mountains of Grande Kabylie, the very heart of the Kabyles' alpine home land. Three quarters of a mile above sea-level is Fort National, watching with needed vigilance over the wild prodigious country. The road swerves around ledges at alarming heights, bends and almost doubles about sharp rocky angles where the hubs of the automobile scrape as it backs and circles again to make the

turn, pierces dark forest tunnels of chestnut-oaks, and cork stripped of their bark (the bare trunks look reddened and hurt), only to swing out on a narrow shelf which seems to end in space above the naked peaks in the distance. And far to the north there is a glimpse of the Mediterranean, a little streak of deeper sapphire than the sky.

In this forested wilderness lurk numberless wild creatures—and even hobgoblins! Far below are the lonely, inaccessible villages of the Kabyles, isolated on the crests of lesser mountains; near the road, their children, tending flocks, scramble out of sight, screaming and frightened, and a solitary mountaineer with his donkey grips gun or quarterstaff as though not knowing what to expect, but prepared for the worst. There are half a million of these primitive people in this boxed-in sector of the Atlas range, but most of them are unseen—perhaps hidden behind crags or in ambushes suggested by creeping shadows.

Down and across the wide vineyard valley of the Summan, and a straight road bordered with palms leads up a steep hill past the crumbling ruins of a Saracenic gate half hidden in a garland of vines, then around a point of land out into the harbor, to the bastions of an old Turkish fort. From the terraced waterfront the red-roofed white buildings of Bougie, embowered in flowers and vines, rise in al-

most perpendicular tiers on the stark rocky flank of Mount Guraya, topped by the mellowing embattlements of a Spanish fortress.

The town clings to its grim protector from northern winds as though seeking the heights, to gain a better reflection of its beauty in the divinely blue waters of the harbor. Little fishing-boats, with furled lateen sails, and a great ungainly freighter ride peacefully at anchor beside the quay. Across the bay the last red-gold glances of the sun glorify the heaped-up splendor of Petite Kabylie and glitter with prismatic brilliance on the Babors' snowy peaks. Deep, blue valleys fill with dusky purple; rugged contours quickly smooth with shadow; and above the empty blackness of the mountains their white caps float ghostly and detached. On the dark bosom of the bay, the town's twinkling lights shine in rippled yellow strands; the sky is soft and spangled above the shimmering mirror of the sea; and all reality fades into night's untroubled dream.

From Bougie a road leads through a fertile valley where the colonists' pretty homes are flanked by flower and vegetable gardens, fruit-trees, and prosperous vineyards. Wild flowers brighten hillside and glade; plumy tassels of tall grass sway and ripple, silvery in the sun; and so the road winds down to the sea. Along the shore eery cries of sea-gulls break the silence as they rise and dip, close to smooth

waves curling and skimming swiftly over the wide white sands of the beach. Perhaps, far out, a jaunty little lateen sail runs shoreward before the wind, goes about, then tacks away into the merging blue of sea and sky. A Corniche road mounts across great masses of grayish-brown and yellow rock, winds and curves along Les Grandes Falaises, bores through a mountain cliff,—framing in granite a bit of the azure blue beyond,—and swings out around ledges sprayed by the surging Mediterranean.

Beside a locked door in the bare cliff stands a burnúsed figure, like the sentry of a sorcerer's den. A few twisting, slippery steps lead down into a faëry hall, glistening with moisture and deathly still: a pearly floor blending sea-shell pinks and yellows; scintillating stalactites in fantastic profusion like tapering jeweled fingers and glittering swords, or reaching from roof to floor like pillars of frosted fruits and weird statues carved from fine crystal; and, in the flare of magnesium, each tiny incrustation sparkles with unearthly brilliance. But the rude blasting for the road along the cliff—which sundered the wall of Rhar-Adim, the Marvelous Grotto—awoke and frightened away the sleeping beauty entombed here by the kelpies of the coast!

Inland, on the way to Sétif (Sitifis, Roman capital of Mauretania), is a fabulous wilderness: the steep, sharp jaws of the mountains shut in; the val-

ley vanishes into a chasm where a frightened torrent rushes madly down; the sky is a strip of blue, behind is a glimpse of the sea, and ahead waits the dark, menacing shadow of Shabet el-Akhira, the Gorge of Death. There are bare jagged peaks a mile high; tunnels dank, dripping, and sepulchral despite the noon sun; dreadful tailless monkeys hang with hairy fingers and toes from trees, swing along the crags, and poke their crafty, peering faces from the great black-mouthed caverns. And so the fairy beauty of Bougie unravels into the fantastic grandeur of the gorge, grotesque with these gnomish spirits of the rocks and caves and mountains.

Among the green and blue and violet-shadowed hills of Sahel, to the west of Algiers, is a great solid mass of masonry on a high mound. It has been named Le Tombeau de la Chrétienne by the French, after the Arabic Kubr er-Rumia, but its original name and meaning are now unknown, and the hills fold about it like dead wings. Outwardly it is in ruins: vines clamber over the huge stone blocks; the pinnacle of rock that once stood on its summit has fallen; the sculptured pilasters around the base and the four false portals facing north, south, east, and west are partially demolished; one side and a part of the roof are broken, grasses and lentisk bushes grow between the fallen stones. But

the structure as a whole is solid and inscrutable; exploration of its interior has revealed tunnels, vaulted chambers, and a spiral gallery—all empty and bare except for a few niches and a bas-relief of lion and lioness, and suggesting only that its real secrets may never be found, and that a forced entrance would bring the heavy masonry down on the trespassers' heads. There is a theory that this is the royal tomb of a descendant of the Kings of Numidia, Juba II, King of Mauretania, and of his wife Selene, daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, but it is more likely that it was built centuries before; it somewhat resembles the cryptic structure of ancient Phenician and Punic mausoleums.

It was a warm, sunny day, and I sat with a grizzled old man on the grassy yellow hillside. To the north, a sparkling bit of the Mediterranean showed between the hills where he had always lived, and above us was the great circular ruin of Kubr er-Rumia, of which he must have heard many, many legends and told many more. . . . After a little urging, he began, in a melancholy way of speaking, and told of the Christian woman who was pursued by an angry crowd, but escaped by running to the old tomb, where a huge swarm of "black wasps" drove her pursuers away; of the greedy pirate prince whose soldiers were driven away likewise when they tried to destroy the ruins in search of treasure. . . .

Were there not other stories, not so commonly told to strangers, but related by the people and passed from fireside to fireside around the country? A young shepherd and his friend had come along and stopped to listen, too, and as if pleased that there were more to hear his tale, the old man spoke again:

"Now, once, long ago, a man of this country, Ben Kassem, was taken as a slave to Christian Spain. And after serving many cruel masters and enduring much hardship, he became old and very feeble, and when once again he was offered for sale at the slave-market, no one would buy his services, nor would his owner take him back. He sat weeping in the darkening and deserted square, wondering how quickly a merciful Alláh would end his misery, and losing his last hope of ever returning to his beloved hills of Sahel. And then a hand touched his shoulder, and he saw standing beside him a tall figure, richly garmented but with face hidden in shadow, save for a very long silvery beard. The strange one seemed to know, without asking, all his sorrowful history, and even told him that his wife was still awaiting him at his home on the hills of Sahel, and that his sons were strong and prosperous.

"Ben Kassem followed the man to a stately mansion, and was well fed, and clothed with as many fine robes as he could wear. Then the strange one appeared again, but now clad in white hlafa and simple

white burnús, and he presented to Ben Kassem a Qur'án bound in scrolled leather, with a clasp of brass, and an amber *subhah,* and a pouch of gold coins. And he drew from beneath the folds of his white burnús a roll of yellow parchment, and promised Ben Kassem freedom if he would take a holy oath to do with the parchment exactly as he should be bidden.

"And Ben Kassem returned at last to his native village, but remained for three days in seclusion as he had been told. He began to count his gold, but alas! each coin crumbled into sand at his touch; he bethought to open the Qur'án,—for he had not heard the reading of the súras for so many years,—but the clasp of brass could not be unfastened and the pages were as though glued together; he picked up the rosary to comfort himself in telling the Good Names of Alláh, but the string turned to dust and the amber beads scattered on the floor. Only the parchment remained unchanged, but he did not dare unroll it, for fear of an evil charm.

"Yet, true to his word, Ben Kassem went to the north door of the great shadowy tomb, Kubr er-Rumia, when the full moon was at its zenith. Here he lighted a few coals in a brazier, but hesitated before burning the parchment as he had promised, for the embers were not ruddy, but gleamed with a cold green flame. At last he touched a corner to the fire.

. . . but the parchment was snatched from his grasp by an unseen hand, the coals in the brazier dimmed and went out, the moon was suddenly darkened, and atop the giant rocky mound a weird, quivering light appeared.

"Trembling, Ben Kassem hid his face in his hands and bowed to the ground, for fear of seeing an unholy sight. There was silence. And then he heard a song like the voice of a mountain stream, laughing and whispering over its rocky bed in the Jurjuras, like the jingle of jewelry on the breast of a dancing-girl, like the rush of wind across the Mediterranean and through the pine-trees of the hills. . . . Ben Kassem muttered a prayer, yet slyly peeped between his fingers. . . . and all about him he saw the huge stones fallen from the ruins, dancing in a flicker of yellow light.

"Suddenly, a tiny disk of gleaming metal struck sharply into his lap—a gold coin smooth and polished with age. He looked up and saw that the top of the tomb had opened like a great seven-pointed star, and that from this crater spouted a thin, sparkling golden stream, circling once in the black sky and then swerving off, with myriad tinklings, toward Spain. Many of the coins fell beside him; but as he made to seize them they vanished into the earth. Then suddenly the song hushed, the crater closed with a deep, hollow clang, the full moon came from

behind a cloud and shed its pale white light over Kubr er-Rumia as it had since before the knowledge of any man, and Ben Kassem was left with the single gold piece, now lying cold and lusterless in his lap.

"Ben Kassem returned at last to his home, and spent his remaining years with his happy family, and to his grandchildren told endless tales of adventure in Spain. And although his sons were as prosperous as the strange one had told him, that evening in the slave-market, Ben Kassem was independent of their care, for every morning beside the smooth yellow coin he found a little pouch of new gold pieces which did not crumble into sand."

The young men had listened to the tale as though they knew it well, yet relished its telling all the more, and then one of them spoke as follows:

"There is another story which I know is true, for it was told to me by my father, and to him by his father, and it is old in my family. There was once a man who came to be known to us as El Musafer, the Traveler, and he was the brother of the great-great-grandfather of my grandfather. You shall soon hear why he was given this name; but in truth he spent most of his time in his father's home, yet he would never help his father and his brothers in their work. For days he would sit by the edge of the sea, and he would answer no questions, although sometimes he said he could see the cities on the

other shore, and then he would journey across the mountains to the desert, where he could watch the sun-spirits, as he said, quiver on the horizon. There were times when he went away and did not return for a number of years, but he would never tell where he had gone nor what he had seen, and this was strange, as you know, and his father and his brothers grew to fear him, and as he brought home no tales of far places, they spoke of him strangely, for they could speak of him in no other way.

"And so it was that, even when his beard was turning gray, he had no sons nor fortune, and was no better off than when he was a youth. And one day when he returned again from one of his long secret journeys, without gain and without gold, he found that his father had died and his brothers scattered to other parts of the country, except only the eldest,—the great-great-grandfather of my grandfather,—whose name was Ibn Hajar. And Ibn Hajar showed him hospitality for three days, as is due any stranger, and then spoke to him gravely as follows:

"'El Musafer, my brother, your idleness has brought you nothing, as Alláh knows. Therefore, if you will stay in my home, you shall take part in the labor that is needed to bring prosperity. There is no use to ask you again, as I have many times before, to busy yourself with some task that befits a man,

and so I will ask you only to shepherd the flocks, and this surely will give you time for your dreaming.'

"Without further ado, El Musafer agreed. But the sheep strayed, and soon many were lost. And so he was banished from his brother's home, but the heart of Ibn Hajar was kind, and El Musafer was given a hut on the lonely hill where no other would stay for fear of Kubr er-Rumia, and food was left for him every afternoon, although he was never to be seen during the day. However, at night a belated wayfarer sometimes saw him sitting under the tree by the hut, or roaming across the dreary folds of the hills near the tomb. And in the village many tales were given tongue: he could take the form of an owl or of a wildcat, at will, and when the moon was big and round and white he would steal a horse and ride away over the mountains like the wind, to the desert beyond; and some had seen him sitting on a rock in the sea, and when they shouted he had vanished and a great white bird swept swiftly away over the dark waves.

"All this may not be true, but there is one tale that I know to be true, for it was my father who told me, and his father told him. A day came when an angry man stood before the door of Ibn Hajar, the brother of El Musafer, and the man said that when he had searched for his horse that morning he

had found it spent, and that it was wet with foam, and that he had fetched a warm covering, but when he returned his horse was dead. And he said the horse had been ridden unto death by El Musafer, and that Ibn Hajar must pay a price for his brother's deed. They went to the cadi and the cadi said that Ibn Hajar must pay. And so that evening he walked toward his brother's hut, determined that at last El Musafer must leave. But when Ibn Hajar reached the spot, the hut was only a bed of cold ashes, like white dust in the moonlight. And the tree was black and scorched and withered. It was thought that nothing more would ever be known of El Musafer; and in truth he was never seen again. But when it was spring, a frightened shepherd came to the house of Ibn Hajar and said that the scorched tree had turned white. And together they went to the cadi, who hastened with them to the spot where the hut had been burned, and they found that the scorched tree was indeed white, for the charred bark had fallen from it. But the pale dead wood was covered with writing, and this is what the cadi read:

" 'Ibn Hajar, my good brother, and the wise cadi will find these words when the bark has fallen from the tree, and will learn one of the secrets of El Musafer, although it is the least; for I have seen even the farthest corner of the earth, but too much knowledge is not well. There are many who have seen, by

the light of the full moon, a pale woman leading her herd of cows through an opening which appears in the side of Kubr er-Rumia, and letting them browse on lush grasses in the mist-filled hollows and upon the lonely hills of Sahel. And those who have seen have been frightened, and only I have seen more.

" 'The cows are milky white, and their moist black nostrils drip with phosphor. Their horns are bright as polished shell, their halters silvery, and from around the neck of each hangs a pearly bell, but no sound can be heard. The woman is fair, but she turns her face always away and will not speak, and in the still of night she leads her herd to a pool that cannot be found by day. The water shines softly and is as vanishing as the fragrance of a lily, for know you that in this pool are stored the colors of the dawn, and the violet and blue and purple of the hills of Sahel. And here the herd quench their thirst, and then wind their way back to the great black tomb with its moon-drenched vines. But more lovely than all these sights is the pale woman; yet in silence she moves always away. . . This I know, however, for I have the witness of mine eyes: along the border of her robe are written, in finest silver, the secrets of Kubr er-Rumia, and whosoever gains her trust may reach close enough to read.' "

The grizzled old man nodded his sanction of the

young man's story, and now the second young man leaned forward and said, with a low, singing voice:

"I see that you have not followed the advice of El Musafer, to whom all respect is due, for he was of your race and kindred, and I confess that I had not heard of him before, but let me tell what I have learned of Kubr er-Rumia. The time of its building is so long ago, as we all know, that no one can set a date, nor even tell the race of men that labored to make it. But the secret of Kubr er-Rumia is far, far older than the tomb itself, and goes back before the earliest schemes of men.

"Even before the birth of my race in Arabia—and no poet can dream the number of centuries since then—there was a tiny oasis in the northern desert of Arabia, but the oasis had not come there in a way that mortals understand, for there was no water, however deep the sands might be dug. It was the oasis of the flame-bodied *jinn* * of the great red desert of Nafúd Shammar. And the green of the seven palms had been taken from an evening sky, distilled and breathed with airy life, and they were nourished from a spring clearer than any water and more precious than the finest zaffer. Around the oasis was a ring of fiery dunes, but within the circle of the palms the sand was white as salt, and sparkling with the most perfect gems of the earth, gath-

* *Jinn:* plural for *jinni* or genie.

ered by the jinn before the coming of man, and more brilliant than any which have been found since. For ages the jinn had labored to make this spot the most beautiful of all.

"But when my forefathers came to roam across Nafúd Shammar, they could never catch a glimpse of this jewel garden of the jinn, because of the ring of fiery dunes. By night they heard the jinn whispering of its wonders, they saw the red dunes flaming fiercely—so fiercely that no man could approach closer than a day's journey. Yet one day a youth was riding in the desert of Nafúd Shammar and suddenly there appeared, far, far before him, a mirage of such splendor that he lost thought and memory of every other thing, for he had seen in the mirage a true image of the secret oasis. The mirage faded as quickly as it had appeared, but he afterward could think of nothing else and wandered for days in hope of seeing it again. He was on the point of death when a passing caravan chanced upon him, and gave him water and care, but he could tell neither his own name nor that of his tribe, and he spoke only of the wonders he had seen. He was taken to an encampment on the edge of the desert, but there he had to be guarded by day and by night, lest he wander back.

"And every one who listened to his story lost all desire except to see the oasis of seven palms, and they

gave no thought of ever reaching paradise. It was then that a Messenger came to the jinn and commanded them to hide their oasis from the sight of mortals so that not even a mirage could reveal a glimpse of the white sands and the spring clearer than any water. Great was the sorrow of the jinn, but they knew they were powerless to disobey, and they bore their treasure across the sea, to hide it under the tallest mountain of Africa. But no sooner had their labor begun than a host of mountain spirits rushed upon them and drove them away, and so they set about to build a mountain of their own . . . and beneath the rock heap of Kubr er-Rumia they hid their oasis of seven palms.

"But still people who had heard of its wonders could not forget, and they wandered in search of it across the desert, only to perish. And their souls were driven from the desert by the jinn, who feared blame for their death, but they could not enter paradise nor hell until the Judgment Day. And so they were entombed under the somber ruins of Kubr er-Rumia, where even to-day the gems still glitter in the white sands; but the hidden oasis has been forgotten by the jinn, the seven palms have disappeared, and the spring, clearer than any water, has vanished.

"And so the sad, pale woman known to El Musafer takes her white cows to pasture in the moon-

light on the hills of Sahel, and to drink from the pool where are kept the colors of dawn, for the milk of these cows is the food of those entombed in Kubr er-Rumia until the Judgment Day. And there they can only watch the glittering gems and dream of the oasis which has vanished, but which was once the most beautiful spot in the whole world and guarded by the fiery dunes and the flame-bodied jinn of the great red desert of Nafúd Shammar."

Thus it came about that these legends of Kubr er-Rumia were told to me; and I in turn have repeated them, but without the fluent embellishments with which they were recited that sunny day. This gloomy pile of antiquity—all the more real for its lack of certain history, and all the more subtle in its conjury of the mind—has taken its part in the lives of the people of Sahel, nor cast a shadow across the current of their unlettered thought. For as they have covered the hills with vineyards, so have they brightened the mystery of these ruins with colorful romance; the art of story-telling passes from father to son like the art of tilling the fields, of doing just a few simple things in life and finding beauty in them. Only those who know more of facts and their written records, no longer have time for fancies, and have lost the skill of weaving legends about the strange and the commonplace.

Westward of Kubr er-Rumia is Jabal Shenua, a

smooth, shapely mountain of most delicate filmy blue, deepening to clearer tones of indigo and then brightening to pale ashen green; beyond is Cherchel with its Roman ruins,—once Cæsarea,—built on the spot where had been the old Punic town of Jol and made the capital of Mauretania by Juba II, who, some say, was buried with his queen in the great tomb on the hills of Sahel. On the way, a dusty road leads past the little houses of Tipasa . . . a stone wall . . . an old clock-tower short and square and green with ivy . . . past an ancient Roman garden with great urns set about in the shade of graying fig-trees and stubby palms . . . to a little hotel near a pretty blue bay of the Mediterranean.

"*Ah, madame, bon jour! Entrez, s'il vous plaît, entrez!*" The proprietor wiped clean hands on a white apron—worn, perhaps, to contain his girth and his enthusiasm—and made flourishing gestures of welcome.

"A good luncheon? Ah, but of course, madame, indeed! The very best!

"Immediately! Oh, madame! not immediately! A good luncheon, and soon—Yes! But immediately!—not the very best!"

Under the grape arbor in the garden his wife set a table with an inviting array of glass and silver, fetched wines from the cellar, and began chattering away about all the good things that there would be

to eat and drink. But the proprietor had disappeared. A moment later I saw him sitting on the end of a little pier in the bay: his dingy waistcoat was split up the back (held in place, apparently, only by the strings of the apron) and the butt of a fishing-pole peeped from under one arm. He lit his pipe, and with the assurance of invariable success looked out over the Mediterranean, blue and deep and crystal-clear before him: an inexhaustible larder for the unexpected guest. And he was proud of the bouillabaisse to be had at his hotel—so much better than the bouillabaisse they serve in Marseilles across the sea!

At Tipasa are two hills, one on each side of the bay, and while the soon-but-not-immediate luncheon was being captured and prepared, there was opportunity to visit them. On the western hill are ancient cisterns, vats, and waterways, and moss-grown steps leading down into the remains of an open theater: pale ruins surrounded by pine and cedar, and lifted up toward the serene azure of the sky with what beauty decadence has left; Roman ruins facing the Mediterranean and that ancient city beyond, whose splendor has left reflections on so many shores. But Tipasa was first settled by the Phenicians, who had already strewn these shores with colonies when Rome was new, and had founded their mother cities two thousand years before.

From the hill to the east,—almost bare of trees,—

the bay was a gleaming sapphire set with rocks bright yellow and red in the sun, the shallows transparent green and opal, the sea a broad mantle scrolled with deeper blue. Among older ruins, here, is the foundation of a nine-naved basilica: pillars, fallen slabs of stone, time-defaced carvings, slowly being covered by vines and weeds; and beneath the broken altar, so the story goes, is buried Saint Salsa. In the fifteen centuries and more since the death of this girl (she was only fourteen) the chapel which once marked her grave was replaced by the basilica whose ruins still bear her name. Salsa was one of the first Christian converts in this old town, and so zealous that she cast into the sea the brazen serpent about which the old idolatrous rites had centered. She was killed almost at once by an infuriated crowd, and thrown over the cliff after the fallen idol. However, it was not long before the town became Christian: her body, which had been miraculously preserved on a bier of seaweed, was buried beneath the chapel on the hill, and she was exalted to sainthood.

Then Tipasa was taken by the Vandals, and all those who would not forsake Christianity had their right hands lopped off and their tongues cut out. Yet the faith survived, and these violent means of suppression served only to strengthen its cause; for according to legend, these maimed martyrs still spoke and prayed despite the loss of their tongues. Now

there is an abiding peace upon the hill and the nine-naved basilica of Saint Salsa,—no sound save the slumber-murmur of the sea, the rustle of grasses and vines over these all but forgotten ruins,—and the little houses which at present are called Tipasa watch dreamlessly the passing of their day.

As I idled over luncheon, a small cart joggled down the road which curves past the garden wall, the horse white and sleek and plump as a circus pony, the driver very sleepy and so fat that his head scarcely nodded as his chin nestled into his bosom. He awoke at intervals to cry a shrill "Y-y-*yeep*-eee!" and flourish a great whip, with a vicious crack of the long black lash, just above the pony's right ear. But the horse proceeded as deliberately as before, its tail bobbing up and down like a limp streamer on a jumping-jack; and the driver would again lapse into oblivious repose. This was the postman of Tipasa. And once each day he drives past the hotel, like a charioteer urging his white horse on toward the hill of Roman ruins, as though he were mediator with the past.

There is a delightful view from the balcony of a room at the Hotel Saint George, in Algiers, of a high hill, its crest fringed with pine and Eucalyptus trees. Their branches sway and toss in the wind like dark-green plumes against a bright turquoise sky, by day;

and at night, through their filagree silhouettes, the stars gleam and flicker like little candles on Christmas-trees. On the wooded slopes of the hill are Moorish villas, surrounded by high garden walls over which the foliage of pepper-trees and trailing vines spill in profusion. Here, wealthy visitors make their winter homes.

Below the balcony, orange- and lemon-trees, mimosa, and palms grow beside a graveled driveway where equestrians are wont to mount their horses for early-morning canters. Near the mellow walls of the hotel, brightened by the magenta blossoms of Bougainvillea vines, a gorgeously arrayed Moor, hopeful of attracting the patronage of tourists, usually displays native rugs, jewelry, and knick-knacks. Often, during the afternoons, English girls and men, in gay summer attire, play spirited matches upon the tennis-courts of the hotel. And occasionally, through a vista among the trees beyond the garden walls, teamsters can be seen, perched high upon the swaying seats of huge wagons loaded with bulging wine-casks, as they joggle down the steep winding Rue Michelet toward the city. The care-free, happy laughter of the tennis-players incongruously mingles with the sharp cracking of whips and lazy cries of the teamsters, and, above the noisy rumble of iron-rimmed wheels, little bells strung on arches over the collars of the horses jangle merrily.

As they journey down the Rue Michelet toward the commercial center of Algiers, the wine wagons, motor-cars, and diminutive trams pass a long blank wall, and through an open sentried gate may be glimpsed stately palms, luxuriant flowers, and the splendor of a palace pale as alabaster. The freedom and freshness of its many open balustrades, slim columns, buoyant Moorish arches, and domed roofs, enliven the imposing simplicity of its fundamental design. And over all its ornamental profusion, some wizardry of structural art has conjured an airy magnificence; or perhaps it is the magic of a fleeting view through the picturesque gate. This is now the summer residence of the French governor-general, the representative of a European republic.

Across the street is a museum, a modern museum, well arranged and tabulated, with specimens as typical of the past they commemorate as a row of pebbles and a phial of brine might be of a lost sea, or a neatly sectioned strip of wood and a yard of sleazy rope, of a forgotten ship. But in the museum is one relic more dramatic, more luridly graphic than any bit of Berber art, Moorish tile, or chip of Roman ruin—the cast of Geronimo, a Muslim converted to Christianity nearly four centuries ago. For his apostasy he was bound hand and foot by his compatriots and thrown into a mold they were using in the construction of a fortress in old Algiers, just

as they poured in the fresh concrete. Many years later, when the fort was torn down, this block was broken open, a cast made of the poor man's image, and his remains taken to the Cathedral of Saint-Philippe.

The cast is bent, knotted, and coiled in irradicable agony—a cold, writhing image of stone. But what is most affrighting, in this monstrous relic, is not the suffering of his physical death, but the pitiless tragedy of spiritual destruction clearly to be seen in the anguished face. It is said that, until the last moment, Geronimo believed that God would rescue him from his persecutors and carry him up to heaven in true Biblical style.

This terrible block of concrete, like the hard setting of human thought and custom, not only formed part of the fortifications against the enemies of these men, but also made a new focus for their faith. Simply killing the man or torturing him to death in a more usual way, would have left nothing to point at, nothing to immortalize the ghastly drama. And more lasting than the concrete itself is the gruesome tale of Geronimo's death.

Yet with the curious similarity of all human thoughts and motives, the glory imposed by others on the memory of this convert, the gesture of implanting his bones in the cathedral has a certain resemblance to his original incarceration. The people

who have exalted him as a Christian saint derived from the relics of his death a reciprocal strengthening of their own faith.

So Mustapha Supérieur, despite its modern rôle as a winter resort, harks back to a grim past that tells something of the permanence of man's strife on every frontier, every old battle-ground where the races and forces of mankind have met for centuries.

It was Christmas Eve, an occasion of elaborate gaiety in Algiers. The lounge of the hotel was crowded with beautifully gowned women, their brilliant evening costumes in becoming contrast to the somber garb of men. From the glass-roofed dining-room came the undertone of a gala dance and entertainment—music, laughter, and bits of conversation.

Christmas is a striking revelation of the city's peculiar mixture of creed and nationality; even the Muslim inhabitants are caught up in the general holiday-making. In the central part of Algiers the streets swarm with rich and poor; rags and gorgeous raiment; people of a dozen races intent upon diverse amusements. Strains of Oriental and European music, the laughter and exuberance of dances, and American jazz mingle with the soft peal of Christmas bells.

The dark wide street before the cathedral was crowded with people trying to get in for midnight

mass, and many of them were sailors,—Portuguese, French, Spanish, Italian,—sailors from every Latin country, some with little flags pinned on their jackets. The throng surged closer about the entrance, pushed forward and up the broad steps, to disappear within the warmly lighted doorway. As I drew near, the men often courteously made way, and I was advanced a pace at a time. The Cathedral of Saint-Philippe, built on the site of an old mosque, still retains a semblance of the original structure: the nave is roofed with old Moorish plaster and supported by columns of which several belonged to the former mosque; the altar, in place of the mihrab, is toward the east, and above it is still inscribed Arabic verses from the Qur'án.

Inside the main door at last, I could catch a glimpse of the cardinal and his clergy, resplendent in the rich colors of the church, celebrating solemn High Mass. The nimbus of the altar, the very Presence in the cathedral, seemed emanating from the pure candles, "the wax produced by the virginal bee, a symbol of the Flesh of Christ born of the Virgin Mary; the wick, a symbol of His Soul; the flame, a symbol of His Divinity." Incense rising heavenward like prayer! Tones of an organ swelling with alleluias of a white-robed choir! A processional radiant with color, triumphant in adoration! And a simple representation of the scene at Bethlehem told the

story of Christmas. The life of Christ was reënacted by the formal ceremony of the church, ciphering the mysteries of His spiritual birth. And it seemed well that amidst the gaiety of Christmas Eve in Algiers, the church should bring back toward the East—where Christ gave His simple and divine example to His followers—a beautiful epitome of His life preserved by the massive dignity of Rome.

There is another church, apart from the conflicting currents of Algiers, that not only brings the message of Christianity to the Europeans and the Europeanized, but also reaches out with sympathy and understanding to North Africa itself. Nôtre Dame d'Afrique rests on a high promontory near the harbor, like a benign sentinel of the sea. In vigilant solitude its tawny dome overlooks a wide sweep of the Mediterranean; and here, under the open blue sky, mass is celebrated every Sunday for the sailors who have lost their lives at sea. The Sailors' Church, as it is sometimes called, was consecrated by the late Cardinal Lavigérie. It was he who founded Les Pères Blancs d'Afrique and Les Sœurs Blanches d'Afrique, who, without proselytizing, have extended their good work (teaching useful arts and assisting the general welfare of the people) throughout North Africa and even across the desert, to the inner fastnesses of the continent. And it is with the spirit of these splendid organizations that the basilica turns its gaze

toward the interior of the country. Around one of the Byzantine apses is the Christlike inscription:

Nôtre Dame d'Afrique, priez pour nous et pour les mussulmans!

This is the prayer that reaches out over the confused races of the coast, to the Mussulmans of the oases and to the people of the remote interior beyond.

CHAPTER FOUR

Across the Mountains

EARLY one morning I set out for the oasis of Bu Saada, which would be the first stop on the way south across the mountains and into the Sáhara. Yusuf, my chauffeur,—a Spanish-Arab,—drove his own automobile, and, although not a guide, was competent to attend to the practical details of the trip. The luggage was stowed in the tonneau, while I rode in the seat beside him, to get a better view of the country. I had chosen Yusuf as the driver for this trip because on previous journeyings through North Africa he had proved invariably reliable—a man of considerable linguistic ability, and gifted with a certain genial grace, a knack of making himself liked wherever he went. As I had planned to follow an indefinite itinerary and carried no letters of introduction, there would be no prearranged formalities, no expectation of what is best unexpected; so would the people who might be met, and the places visited, be all the more enjoyable.

The brightening light of dawn gave a splendid

panorama from the summit of a hill: the city we were leaving, the broad fertile plains of the Mitija, and the shadowy bulk and snowy peaks of the Jurjuras, the Lesser Atlas range we were to cross. At the foot of Mutapha Supérieur's verdant slope lay Algiers, fascinating city of contrasts, its white buildings crowded to the very water's edge of the Mediterranean—swinging like the curved blade of a simitar around the bay and out again past Cape Matifu. Great liners rode sleepily at anchor in the harbor, while little fishing-boats with wing-pointed sails were putting out to sea for the day's catch. In the gardens down the hillside a new-born breeze stirred the flowers, and with their fragrance mingled the salty tang of the sea. Gossamer mists drifted low over the Mediterranean, and waves curled in white foam along a strip of sandy beach beyond the town or broke into fine spray over sand-embedded rocks. Dawn bloomed. And as its petals fell, pearly vapors lighted into opalescence. From the Flower of the East the sun rose like a fiery fruit, its orange-yellow glow breaking through the fleeting mists.

Cumulus clouds swept in from the sea, and, moving slowly above the plains, now and then dropped veils of moisture, as though always to keep the country-side fresh and green. Turning away from the Mediterranean, from the early-morning traffic of market carts and colorfully garbed pedestrians

trudging toward the city, the road passed prosperous French homesteads as it wound gently on toward the mountains. Sometimes it was bordered with sycamores, and Eucalyptus festooned with shaggy bark, the spicy odor tantalizing to the nostrils. In wide depressions of the plains, puffs of fog rolled with blundering buoyancy, always just a little way ahead —smoky, stringy strands catching faintly at the earth, only to vanish in dissolution as these penumbral playthings tumbled before the wind. As far as the eye could see, the great Mitija was neatly patterned with fields of grain, vegetable gardens, and orchards. And for miles and miles, along wires strung between precise rows of low posts, grape-vines almost bare of leaves clung like coarse brown lace.

Over all this fertile expanse, dew sparkled in the sunshine like tiny jewels, and gnarled olive-trees, softened by their foliage of silvery green, added a note of substantiality and ancient beauty, while oranges and lemons, ripening amidst the sheen of dark leaves, gave promise of prosperity anew. Across the clear azure sky the clouds cruised like white billowing sails, their shadows revealing in delicate tones of violet a clearer suggestion of the wooded slopes and rocky highlands of the mountains—a majestic bulwark, zaffer blue, rearing abruptly from the plains and cleft by great crevasses the color of purple grapes. Mists, rising from the valleys, draped the

A SHEEP MART

The markets of little villages were brisk with trade

jagged cobalt peaks and wreathed a halo about the giant cone of Lalla Khadíja, towering in crystalline heights above the rest and glistening in the sun. This queen of the Atlas is named for the Prophet's beloved wife, and near its summit—seventy-five hundred feet above the sea—is a shrine to which pilgrimage is deemed meritorious by his followers in North Africa.

The breeze was warm, and fragrant with the earthy odors of the country-side; placid streams, sometimes near the road, meandered along as though resting after their mad descent from the mountains, bringing new alluvium to the soil and clear water from perpetually melting snows. On the banks of these quiet rivulets wild grasses rippled in the sunshine and nodded their feathery heads soberly in the shade of cypresses. And upon the highway flowed a varied current of life. Flocks of spotted goats and sheep, some with the owner's mark dyed on their backs in red, were led by Berber herdsmen in search of pasturage on the plains or higher in the hills. The sheep—a wavy mass of soft, dingy white—docilely followed the shepherd, who ofttimes carried a lamb or a kid too young to keep up with the others; while the goats, quicker and more independent, nibbled at every bit of herbage by the wayside. But the sound of the automobile horn would galvanize this leisurely migration into scrambling tumult; the good

shepherd, in humble anxiety lest harm come to any of his charges, would hasten to clear the way. And as we passed he would stand with the fold clustered about him, looking with an expression of passive bewilderment after the foreign engine which had wrought such havoc with the peaceful progress of his flock.

But of far different temperament were the tiny donkeys ambling patiently along, burdened with brush for firewood or panniers overflowing with vegetables. These stubborn little brutes looked askance at the automobile, as if it were an overgrown beetle suspected of evil intentions, and stood stiff-legged and immovable until it had backed and labored around over the bumpy margin of the road. Their masters, sturdy Kabyles, trudged along beside them, often accompanied by a group of women and girls dressed in gay colors; some of the women were old and withered, but it was usually the youngest and prettiest girl who was perched atop a donkey's load, pummeling its shoulders with little brown feet. And the men—so picturesque in their flowing robes, as pedestrians—became very ridiculous when mounted in this uncomfortable mode, their lean shanks constantly flaying the overburdened little beasts to keep them moving.

Once a train of weary pack-camels passed, their heads held high; ignoring alike farm wagon, auto-

mobile, and passer-by, and indifferent to the proddings and hoarse cries of their drivers. Coming from across the mountains, these shaggy dark-brown beasts bore with stately dignity the fruits of the oasis to the markets of the coast. In the open fields Berber laborers, equally unconcerned with the happenings on the highway, ran shallow furrows with primitive wooden plows drawn by oxen or asses, sometimes one of each harnessed together.

The markets of little villages were brisk with trade: bleating flocks crowded through the streets, raising clouds of dust; donkeys dozed in the roadway; white-robed bearded men squatted beside windowless walls and drank coffee served by a vender; others stood about in little groups, animated, voluble, yet reserved, perhaps hiding their real thoughts with a barrage of words exchanged in barter. Yet peace prevailed in these villages, one's weal and woe shared in the commonwealth of all: the grave cadi speaking quietly with his thoughtful friend; the youth and the patriarch; the silent veiled Arab women, their joys and their miseries alike hidden from the eyes of the curious. A community of blessings as of the warm sun shining down impartially on each one.

Often along the roadway were heaps of stone where Kabyle men and women industriously plied small, long-handled sledges with effective precision as they broke the rocks into bits for road-mending.

The women, who never wear veils, were all adorned with silver-mounted turquoise and coral jewelry usual for them to wear: bracelets, necklaces, and large hoop ear-rings. Their dress was generally of dark-blue cotton, with broad stripes of yellow and red, held together on the shoulder with brooches and girdled about the waist with loose belts. The men wore brown-and-white gandurahs of hand-woven wool, leather belts, and head-dresses of yellow-and-white striped or plaid cotton, wound around *chechias.** Their forlorn, ragged children, aided by vicious mongrels, guarded flocks of goats and sheep; bent old women, too decrepit for work on the road, were cooking the food in iron pots hung over smoky fires before low, dirty, shapeless tents. Kabyle women, although enjoying more "freedom" than those of more genuine Muslims, endure unusual hardship and fatigue, working as common laborers with their men far afield. But in going from place to place they never seem to acquire better standards of living, and their mountain homes are notoriously unsavory, a curious contrast to the decorative attire and hardy physiques of these people.

The Kabyles are one of the larger divisions of the Berbers, who form three fifths or more of the pop-

* *Chechia:* French for *tashashit* (plural, *tishushai*), one of the few Berber words commonly used in North Africa; a red felt cap similar to the *tarbush* or fez.

ulation of Algeria and an even greater proportion in other parts of North Africa, and who since very early times have been known to many peoples and by different names: Libyans, Numidians, Gætulians, Mauretanians. "Barabara" and "Beraberata," with several other words, were inscribed on Egyptian monuments about thirty-five hundred years ago and were evidently applied to various tribes of the ancient Libyans, for the Egyptians called the race as a whole by several other names; the modern word Berber may have originated with the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Arabs, or even with the Berbers themselves. From the point of view of survival,—dogged, obstinate survival with comparatively slight racial mixture,—they are the most interesting historical specimens in Africa, having outlived as an integral and numerically dominant race the ancient Egyptians, but without rising much above the prehistoric civilization of that venerable people.

When the Arabs first came to North Africa, they gave the name Kabyles (Arabic plural, *Gabâïl*, meaning "tribes" or "tribe people") to the Berbers in general, probably because of their marked tendency to local segregation, but the term has come to apply only to those living in the mountainous tracts of La Grande Kabylie (sometimes known as Kabylia of the Jurjura or Adrar Budfel, "The Mountain of Snow") and La Petite Kabylie, and along the littoral

to the east and west of Algiers. There are also a few in Tunisia and in Saharan oases. Many of the Kabyles' failings may be due to the fact that because of their location they have come most closely and most disadvantageously in contact with the numerous invaders of North Africa. They are thrifty and astute bargainers: the women will even offer for sale the adornments they may be wearing, if a good price can be expected; a propensity explainable by their meager life in the mountains and in part by the souvenir-acquisitiveness of tourists. The Kabyles are industrious farmers and clever at many handicrafts.

Their villages, surrounded by thick cactus hedges, are located upon sites founded by their forebears on top of ridges and mountain spurs, and their stone houses, generally roofed with red tiles, are so closely crowded together that from a distance they resemble a pile of rocks. These homes are without chimneys; and while the small openings in the walls may serve as peep-holes, they provide very little ventilation. Here the families live separated from their live stock by partitions which do not reach to the roofs, and in the winter seek underground chambers for warmth. Their mosques are poorly constructed. The people practise the Málikite rites of the Sunnite faction of Islám, regarding Morocco rather than Mecca as the center of their religion, but are not very ear-

nest Muslims. And such a thing as a public bath—a usual feature of all communities strictly Muslim—or any other kind of bath, is not customary among the Kabyles, who are proverbially dirty and who do not even observe the prescribed ablutions before prayer.

With clannish isolation characteristic of most Berbers, each of these villages is a separate municipality, locally governed by a council—a doleful example of democracy. This form of government is more or less typical of Berbers: the council is called a *jemâa* and is attended by all males over sixteen, headed by an *amin*, and in time of peace or war it is the sum total of legislation, jurisdiction, and administration, as the village is the sum total of the body politic. Although their *marabouts* * are versed in Arabic, the Kabyles have no alphabet for their own language, only a primitive oral "literature," common to all divisions of the race and consisting of simple verses, dancing-songs, and historical legends, rendered by professional bards.

The other Berbers have inscribed native words on jewelry and old monuments, and there are a few examples of their writing, of which the most notable is the *Tawahhid* ("The Unity of God"), believed to be in a Moroccan dialect and the oldest African document in existence, save only the Egyptian and

* *Marabouts:* French spelling for *al-Murábitún.*

Ethiopic. Even this treatise is Muslim, and not concerned with a theology developed by the Berbers; for indeed they have never been known to originate a well-formulated religion. Among them the only law universally respected is the unwritten code of the *Kanum*, which, like a voice from the stone age, upholds the "rights" of the individual above the welfare of even such a state as one of their orphan villages. Nor dares the council to gainsay this prerogative, for fear of bloody revenge, lynching, or even internal strife in the hamlet. A couple of villages, sometimes more, may partially unite to form an *arsh* or tribe, and occasionally such tribes enter into a disjointed alliance called the *Thakebilt*. Even then, each village keeps autonomously to itself.

Before the French occupation, the Kabyles and other Berbers were the only people in North Africa who owned land to any extent as personal property; the Arabs had divided their land into large sections allotted *en bloc* to tribes or in cities and towns owned collectively by families. Consequently, the Kabyles, always stubborn feudists among themselves, especially resented the inroads of French settlers, and in the insurrection of 1871 made an attack upon the colonists, massacred a few, and earned for themselves a rather unpleasant reputation.

But in all justice to these primitive people, it should be remembered that theirs was the original

KABYLE FARMER BOYS

ownership—original, it may be said, for a matter of at least ten thousand years. Their feelings can be most keenly appreciated by contrast with the sentiments of the colonizer; the latter are amusingly portrayed by a remark which an eminent American once made of the Kabyle insurrection: "The perfidy and cruelty of the natives remind one forcibly of what the Puritans and the early settlers westward-bound in the United States had to endure in their battles for territory against the treacherous Indians."

The Kabyles are not noted for judgment and military sense, despite the fact that for the past twenty-five centuries they have had the example of the best armies in the world—those of Carthage and Rome and their successors in supremacy. When 'Abdu 'l-Qádir* was leading his brilliant and for the time successful repulsion of the French, the Kabyles refused him aid,—for all his eloquence and military genius,—only to rise alone in this futile rebellion thirty years later, when Fort National already dominated Grande Kabylie, and the army that built it commanded every strategic point in Algeria.

Since then, finding resistance useless, the Kabyles have submitted, often with thinly veiled hostility, and the French have recognized their value as farmers, craftsmen, and laborers. They make good sol-

* Abd el-Kadir and Abd-el-Kader are the common French spellings; literally, "Servant of the (All) Powerful."

diers, too, for, according to their own unwritten law, every male bears arms, by right and by compulsion, from the age of sixteen to sixty, and there are very few who are not able-bodied: it was from the Kabyle tribe of Zouaoua that the first battalion of Zouaves was recruited. The Kabyles are quick to learn, and have many industries of their own (like other Berbers they are well known for their jewelry), but some of their native arts have a surprising air of antiquity. One type of pottery, modeled without the use of a wheel and decorated with outline drawings, is almost identical in workmanship with the most ancient Egyptian ceramics, dating from the early prehistoric development of the art, nine or ten thousand years ago.

The roads in Algeria—which are numerous and usually in excellent repair—are to a certain degree another indication of Berber "industry." They are built of finely broken rock closely packed with sand and rolled layer upon layer to enduring smoothness, graded, and drained. Through the mountains particularly they are almost permanent constructions, often hewn and tunneled through solid granite. The maintenance and further development of such a system, are made financially practical by utilizing under French supervision the cheap labor of the Kabyles and other Berbers, who in this way pay their road tax or work voluntarily for a few cents a day.

But it is not a lavish gesture of the colonial government to maintain, between seemingly unimportant villages in the mountains and desert, roads which have been compared to those of the Roman Empire. They are an attraction for the streams of visitors who come to see, incidentally, the picturesque workers and their isolated hamlets, and who of course contribute indirectly to the upkeep. And, needless to say, the roads are of indispensable strategic importance—modeled after the military highways built by army engineers during the first forty years of French occupation, a period of active military rule. Without such means of rapid transportation the mountains and desert would still be "inaccessible," and even Fort National would lose most of its effectiveness.

There is a certain irony in the fact that the Kabyles earn a scanty livelihood in part by breaking their native granite . . . only to make foreign control more certain. They seem not to realize that these roads, although passing through few individual villages, vitiate the protection of the mountains upon which they have depended for so many centuries. They are so illiterate, have learned so little from the legends of their history, and some of the tribes are so isolated, that their feelings toward this "peaceful penetration" is merely the unknowing resentment of "natives" against any "modern improvement." In

towns frequently visited by tourists, the Kabyles smilingly make use of every opportunity to profiteer in their small way, but along the less commonly traveled roads, one may meet a farmer or a shepherd from some remote hamlet, who doggedly faces the automobile as though it were his first contact with the twentieth-century civilization which, like a visitation from another world, had invaded his age-old and unchanging mountain home.

Besides the Kabyles, there are many other Berber peoples of North Africa. The Riffian hillmen of the westerly coast, a sturdy and strong race of purest Berber blood, have recently made a worthy struggle for freedom under the able leadership of Abd el-Kerim, but by their untimely surrender have betrayed the surprising lack of coöperation and cohesion which is common to most Berbers. And their kinsmen in the mountains of Morocco impassively witnessed their defeat, when determined assistance, though personally disadvantageous to many of the chiefs, would almost certainly have meant triumph for a common cause. The Tawarik * of the hitherto almost inaccessible west-central Sáhara—a hinterland of a million and a half square miles—still lead their fiercely independent nomad life as far as possible from contact with the outside world, and have developed many unique customs and a peculiar hier-

* Tawarek, Tuareg, Touareg.

archy of "noble" and "vassal" tribes. It is said that some of their ancestors, the Avrigha or Afrigha, who once lived along the coast near the site of Carthage, gave their name to the continent of Africa itself.

Others are, for instance, the Shawias of the Aurès Hills, the Shelloohs of Morocco, and the troglodytic tribe of Berbers in Tunisia—living in subterranean chambers opening into well-like courts several stories deep. The now extinct Guanches of the Canary Islands were related to the Berbers, as are also, to a lesser extent, negroid tribes like the Fula of the Sudan and the Tibbu of East Sáhara. All these variant strains seem due to the widely dissimilar and isolated regions they inhabit, the different races with whom they have come in contact, and possibly to primary differences among the Berbers themselves.

Still another people grouped with the Berbers are yet in many ways so different from them that they seem almost of another race: the M'zabites living in the desert fastness of the Shabka, peaceful and deeply religious, builders of cities rather than primitive villages, devoted to urban life, and founders of a worthy and unique civilization independent of any other. In contrast to the moderately brunet coloring of most Berbers, they have black hair and eyes, and pale creamy complexions. Although they may be found as shopkeepers and merchants in nearly

every city of Algeria, they never remain long away from their home land in the desert. Many explanations of their origin have been offered. Yet, because of their appearance, their customs, and their personality, it is not improbable that they partially represent ancient Phenicians who colonized the North-African coast and mingled with Berber tribes.

The known history of the Berbers is an interesting narrative of their long and inglorious struggle with many conquerors and many races. But their scarcely reconstructed prehistoric ramblings, of which nothing very reliable is known, hinge on the development of the Iberian, Mediterranean, or Brunet Race, of which they form a numerous group. Twenty-five thousand years and more ago, there was an active flux of men and animals between Africa and Europe, across two wide strips of land: the remnants of one still remain as Italy and Sicily; the other, greatly narrowed, has been cut through by the straits of Gibraltar. The Mediterranean was thus divided into two small seas, North Africa was a jungle, and the Sáhara a vast fertile wooded tract, abounding with all sorts of wild beasts now vanished. At this time there were negroes in southern and central Africa and perhaps farther north; and in southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin were primitive peoples, the "Brown-Whites," or Brunets, some of whom might be called the aborigines of North Africa. The

"Blond-Whites" (Nordics or Aryans) and the Mongolians were developing in even vaguer regions to the north and east.

As the Mediterranean began to assume its present configuration, the Brunets were divided into two main groups, north and south. They are now referred to by somewhat general and variable terms. The Iberians (literally, the Ancient Spaniards) extended over the British Isles, France, Spain, Italy, and the Balkans. The Mediterranean Race, to use a broader term, included not only this northern group but also the peoples of North Africa, Asia Minor, and Arabia. The Brunet Race, including both the others, was a great polymorphic group of peoples extending from the British Isles, southern Europe, and the Mediterranean basin, along the Indian Ocean and the eastern coast of China, and even spreading across the islands of the Pacific to both its African and American shores. So this Brunet Race, with its "heliolithic" customs, included the Dravidians of ancient India; the Maoris; the Polynesians; and the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas of ancient Mexico, Central America, and Peru. In countries like Mesopotamia, the Brunets were beginning agriculture twenty thousand years ago, and here, many thousand years later, the first known civilization was established by the Sumerians, an early Brunet race. Then, while the "Blond-Whites" were slowly evolving

from their drifting existence following reindeer over the northern steppes of Europe, the Mediterraneans were building up the second and third most ancient civilizations, Babylonia and Egypt.

With the increasingly aggressive vigor of the Celts, first wave of the Nordics, the European Brunets, or Iberians, were decimated, subjugated, isolated in the mountains (probably as the Basques), or driven southward across the remaining isthmus at Gibraltar and perhaps by way of Asia Minor, into North Africa. The present Berbers are descendants of these last Iberians and of the Mediterraneans who preceded them in North Africa; it is likely that the Iberians were much more numerous and found little resistance from others in the new country. On old Egyptian monuments are paintings of fair, blue-eyed warriors with reddish hair, whose helmets somewhat resemble the gear of ancient Europeans, and who are supposed to have been Berbers. Some of these people show to-day a tendency toward blondness (undoubtedly they were from the first of lighter complexion than more aboriginal African Brunets like the Egyptians), but if they were as fair as these paintings suggest, the tendency might have been derived from slight admixture with the Celts. In any case, the Berbers have always belonged primarily to the Brunet Race, and at present differ from the other "natives" of North Africa not so

much in coloring as in their stocky build and rather flat faces.

For a long time after their advent to Africa (probably about ten thousand years ago) they prospered in an unspectacular way. Later they traded with the Phenicians, but for the most part applied themselves to developing, very crudely, the agricultural possibilities of their strip along the Mediterranean. Split into many factions, they were never able to organize anything resembling national unity, and as a result fell into their first period of bondage with the rise of Carthage. From then on they welcomed each new invader, readily adopting the religion or other formalities of the new-comers, in the hope of deliverance, only to find in each another master. They were conquered in turn by the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantine general Belisarius, the Arabs, and finally the French, and meanwhile were partially overrun by Jews and Turks. Consequently, the Berbers as a separate race are now found only in the mountains and in the remoter parts of the desert. Some of the individuals and a few of the tribes have shown merit, but the majority (here considered) have proved themselves inferior to every race with whom they have come in contact.

Yet despite the many times they have been subjugated,—except a resistant minority here and there,—the Berbers have clung with surprising tenacity to

their Hamitic tongue, allied to the ancient Egyptian, even though they have virtually no written language and are nearly all illiterate. However, even in their speech they show their clannish segregation; almost every tribe has a different dialect, but Arabic is the language of religion, state, and culture. Never known to have created a religion of their own, they have adopted, at one time or another, Christianity, Judaism, and various forms of idolatry; and most recently they have become Muslims, finding a strong appeal in the directness of the Islamic code. Still, they do not follow its precepts closely, and have partially degenerated to the worship of saints, and to the religious demagogy of a marabout priesthood —principles alien to Islám. And the Berbers are extremely superstitious and fond of amulets which recall the svastika, emblem of good luck in the old "heliolithic" demonology.

Their women usually do not wear veils and have much more freedom than is customary among Muslims; a freedom reminiscent of the ancient matriarchy of the Iberians and the Great Mother, or Creator, in their early mythology, and now seen in the feminine gender of important words in some of the Berber dialects; in the occurrence of frequent "queens" and female saints; and in the fact that inheritance often goes to the son of the eldest daughter or sister. But this "freedom" of Berber women also

has its less flattering features: although they frequently have a voice in the crude government and jurisprudence of the villages, and in time of war have been known to fight valiantly beside their men, they are often bought or summarily dismissed according to their husbands' pleasure, and are obliged to do hard labor even outside the limits of the household, on "equal" terms with their men. Moreover, the morals of Berber women are unusually "free"—more so among some tribes than others. The majority of Wálid Naïl girls leave their homes for the dance-halls of towns and cities; the term "Wálid Naïls" has come to be applied to the women of all races in the red-light districts of North African cities.

Natives of Barbary since before the dawn of history, and still more numerous here than any other race, the Berbers are the human substratum of North Africa. But they have accomplished little compared with other Mediterraneans—Sumerians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Phenicians, Carthaginians, Arabs, Jews. They are like a branch of humanity that sprang from the main stem and has since remained unavailing and fruitless. Yet they have had many opportunities. In early times they were in close contact with the Egyptians, those immortal pioneers from the obscurity of primevalism; they saw the citied Cyrenaica of the Greeks, and the splendor of Carthage on their shores; cultured Roman cities replacing the

trading-posts of the Phenicians, those mercantile explorers of the seas, were reared in white marble along the coast; Roman legions marched through the mountains to the desert beyond, building roads which were to be the envy of centuries. . . . The foremost nations of the world crossed their threshold, and the Berbers would gain a smattering of these civilizations . . . only to forget as soon as the conqueror had gone; they were made soldiers and laborers and slaves, perhaps would learn a little more . . . only to return to their mountains, to scratch the ground with wooden plows and reinflame the feuds among their villages.

They have had a few minor kingdoms of their own, and a picturesque queen, Kahina, who led them to transient victory after the first Arab invasion. Then the Arabs came again with meteoric rise to empire, and remained in the full flower of civilization for five hundred years. And despite all the brilliant races that had visited the Barbary coast before, it was only with the stimulus of this desert people that the Berbers showed their worth in the Muslim conquest of Spain, in the molding of their several North-African states, and in what contributions they have made to Moorish culture.

But there have been reasons for the Berbers' characteristic behavior. It has been suggested, without basis, that they are remnants of very primitive

humans like the Cro-Magnon man, or at an early period incorporated such a race. Perhaps all Iberians were inferior to other Mediterraneans. In any case the Pre-Berbers were not the Iberians who fought the Celts to the finish, nor those who gained advantages by surrender, but those who fled to North Africa—a fertile country offering no struggle for existence, so broad that there was no incentive to take to the sea, and where there were few good harbors to encourage such departure. Except the Egyptians far to the east, the immigrants apparently met no strong race with whom to contend, and the dependable rainfall did not encourage migrations. They were therefore destined to segregation—by the mountains and the lack of large rivers for commerce and travel. Consequently, the tribes developed different dialects and had no great need for a written language, communications, or records of any note. Their only stimulus was the invaders, from each of whom they retreated as they had from the Celts. The Berbers who stood their ground were killed, those who fled into the desert were strengthened, but the majority took refuge in the fateful mountains, without the benefit of mingling with the conquerors, or the opportunity to flourish on the plains.

Indeed, with the exception of the Egyptians, Africa has produced little in the way of human valuables—unique Africa, neither New World, East, nor

West. The Berbers are like backward Europeans in the dress of Arabs: surely any other race but these Libyans of yore and of to-day, these object-lessons of history would have derived more mastery of spirit from the loveliness and grandeur, the crystalline heights of their mountains, and from that great teacher the Desert. Their utmost fruitfulness was for Rome, their utmost prowess for Islám, and at present their future is for France. But it is not likely that they will ever rise to independent prominence worthy of their home of nearly a hundred centuries, and worthy of the Mediterranean Race.

As we neared the mountains, the warm, sweet breath of the country-side was met by airy freshets cooled by the touch of snow and spicy from cedar and pine. Over the foot-hills, plowed fields of rich dark loam or reddish soil spread like crumpled blankets; laurel and asphodel fringed thick woods of oak, wild olive, juniper, and cypress. Coveys of partridges and quail scurried into thickets or whirred up and away, while smaller birds skimmed across the fields and spiraled up on wings vibrant with the bright promise of the day. Sometimes a man rested by the way, seeming a part of the rocky hillside, so perfectly did his brown robes blend with his surroundings. Indeed, these people are closely akin to the mountains; no more altered by centuries

of invasion than the rugged peaks which wear a softening mantle of snow each winter, only to show again their barren, changeless rock in the spring.

The mountains soared, rougher and more prodigious, clad in dense primeval forests—dim aisles and vaulted arches with the gigantic spires above. The exalted silence and majesty were overpowering, desolating, and the occasional sight of human habitation came always as a surprise. Yet every once in a while there was a tiny thatched hut of sticks and stones, tucked beneath the brow of a precipice, and a patch of cleared ground newly tilled and ruddy as though flushed from a long, unproductive sleep. And a man plowing in one of these fields, with a stout forked stick hitched to a camel, seemed anchored to the steep slope only by the primitive implement. Once we saw a scene like a picture of a parable: a youth raising the head of an old man who had apparently been stricken while working his land.

Little boys guarded flocks by the wayside; goats and shepherds alike would leap in scattered flight over the rocks, the solemn, dark-eyed children then gazing impassively after us. Sometimes a shepherd boy sat alone, piping a plaintive roundelay of two or three notes on a flute, repeated again and again like the trill of a wild bird. Where the road had been cut through an artery of a mountain, icy water trickled into a basin, and wayfarers rested from

their journey. Farther along, we overtook a young couple riding a mule. She smiled, blushing to the roots of her braided black hair, but he looked very severe and held his gun across the pommel of the saddle as if welcoming instant battle on behalf of his bride.

At times the flanks of the mountains narrowed into chasms, where, far below, streams whirled over foam-flecked rocks; then opened again into valleys of evergreen forests under a flood of sunshine. The road bored through rocky spurs, swung sharply around aeried ledges; an eagle lifted from a blighted tree on a towering crag and veered swiftly away with an effortless rhythm of great wings. . . . This was a new, old world of bare jagged peaks, a chiseled wilderness thrust up in the pristine might of natural forces before they had ramified and been spun into the fine texture of soft earth and living creatures. The massive rocks, half crystalline, half amorphous, were as though freshly cooled from the matrix of their formation; freshly cooled and then grown cold and stark. Here broken, there colored tawny pink and russet,—the first tinge of mellowing age,—they were still far from crumbling, far from peaceful decay into warm mothering earth.

These young giants—what little soil there was, trying to cover their hunched, bared-boned backs!—seemed ready to engulf the trespasser or open to

SHEPHERD BOY

Piping a plaintive roundelay of two or three notes on a flute—repeated again and again like the trill of a wild bird

divulge their depths. Yet the soft shadows of clouds swept over this scene as if forecasting the far-distant but inevitable decadence into a kindly country-side. The clouds sailed toward the topmost peaks like ships against an embattled coast, a barrier to the once verdant Sáhara. For each galley, freighted with the moist breath of the Mediterranean, was caught in the currents above these mountain reefs and spilled its precious cargo; while icy pinnacles reamed through and gleamed victoriously in the sun.

Through the Sakomody pass, up and down the winding, swerving road, and across a plateau to a little hamlet half-way to Bu Saada. . . . Aumâle was established by the French as a military outpost, three or four generations ago, replacing the ruins of a Turkish fort which in turn had been built from the remains of a Roman town, Auzia, founded by the legions of Augustus. It was named after the Duc d'Aumâle, fifth son of the Duc d'Orléans who later became king, and of Marie Amélie, princess of the Sicilies. To this leader of French armies in North Africa, 'Abdu 'l-Qádir finally surrendered, after having defeated seven or eight previous generals and governor-generals; surrendered at last to an adversary of blood as princely as his own. In this historic but unspectacular spot, we stopped for luncheon, and soon were on our way again.

A steady drizzle of rain began to fall, while, from

the deep ravines below, a thick fog rose about us as we slowly and cautiously coasted down the sharp turns of the descent. Once in a while a man of the desert, mounted on a gaily caparisoned horse, would appear before us out of the mists, his face so weather-furrowed that, like the sailor, he seemed almost to scowl. But reining his mount to a rearing halt, each of these stalwart cavaliers, with a quick, free smile, would hail us with the friendly greeting, *"Sa 'haid!"* to which we would answer, *"Sa 'ha!"* Again the muffled hum of the motor, the faint creaking of springs, seemed only to accentuate the deadening silence of the cold wet pall smothering about us.

Suddenly Yusuf jammed on the brakes and stopped close to the rocky wall on our right. For a moment I could see nothing but the empty shadow of fog—empty, yet echoing with men's voices joined in song, a weird chanty as from within the cliff itself. Then the swirling vapors took form, and like phantoms a small band of Arabs with their swaying, bewildered camels, loomed indistinctly ahead. Directed by proddings and throaty cries, the heavily laden, softly treading beasts slowly groped their way around us and were again enveloped in fog.

But at last the way became less steep, the air clearer; the mountains cut swiftly down into the desert like heavy swords unavailing against an intangible East. Pretty little larks flew fluttering be-

fore us, almost under the very wheels of the automobile. The rain and mist brightened with a diffused amber glow, and far ahead the sun was shining, sudden as dawn, splendid as full noon, bathing the desert in a haze of shimmering light. A rainbow arched across the sky, as if to surpass with its frail beauty the massive grandeur of the mountains and open a portal through the ghostly earth-bound clouds. From this radiant valance the rain seemed suspended, catching the swiftness of sunshine and bearing it gently to earth—a magic veil giving added glamour to the desert beyond.

Our road led toward one end of the rainbow. Suddenly we were drenched in its gleaming, pouring iridescence, and I almost expected to see, somewhere near, the fabled pot of gold! Then all this glory of color was dispelled; the curtain drew aside from the great bare stage of the desert. But more ethereal than any visual thing, a singing wind brushed by, lifting the last gleamy veil and calling us on toward far blue hills beyond which was Bu Saada.

CHAPTER FIVE

Wálid Naïls of Bu Saada

From the open front of a café maure a stream of light cut through the darkness and lay like a bright dagger across the sandy street—a gleam from the soul of an oasis rapt in moonless night, free of its daily trammels, alive with ecstasy anew. Thoughts more vivid than if painted on Day's decorated face, knit bright textures unraveling into the night beyond the farthest vision of clear noon. And so were all the senses attuned more keenly to the night: the faintest brush of flowing garment against a darkened wall, the swish of sand, the feel of its softness underfoot, the very sense of moving, of breathing, of beating heart, became intensely real yet savoring of unreality. The sky was lucid and blue with the brilliance of stars; cool air coiled about unseen corners; passers-by were few, and far outnumbered by beings passing with incorporate speed, communing with one another by knowing, unvoiced thoughts; and, perchance, a whispering in a palm's black-shadowed fronds, as of animalcule spirits from a pool now lacquered by the night.

Inside, the square little room of the café was filled with the haze of tobacco smoke, and a score or more desert men, as if guided to this meeting-place by the path of light. Yusuf and I entered and were served with coffee by a young Arab, who filled our cups from a small brass pot off a glowing bed of coals. Arabs in hooded white baránis, a black-veiled Tarki* silent and aloof, oasis merchants, a few caravan traders, and a black-bearded spahi draped in the graceful folds of a brick-red cloak were sitting on mats upon the floor and drinking coffee from tiny cups. Young men about town, idlers characteristic of metropolitan oases, exchanged witticisms; a closely contested game of chess was in progress between two old men; while others silently told the Good Names of Alláh on their *subah*, rosaries of loosely strung amber or wooden beads.

Quietly reviewing their thoughts, these men were relaxed from the day's endeavor, withdrawing a while into a world of reverie, of memories and anticipations, each finding for himself complete adjustment to the facts of his life, a sureness of step, a personal poise which treats each exigency as simple and unsurprising. Their faces were animated; they observed strangers with an interested glance, yet were courteously incurious, almost austere. There was a feeling of comradeship in the café, but as each sipped

* Tarki: Singular for Tawarik or Tuareg.

his coffee and smoked his cigarette, he seemed intimate only with his own individuality, breathing and rebreathing his total of experience until each particular dissolved, and he and his life became one clear solution. And so, despite the fraternizing of the group, each white-robed form seemed gathered in isolated contemplation—at once esthetic, and spiritual, and droll.

Our coffee finished, we continued on our way to the dance of the Wálid Naïls. No light shone from the unbroken rows of houses in the narrow, angular streets. But through the darkness came the stifled barbaric rhythm of drums, now close, now distant; and, fainter still, the persuasive plaint of flutes: an epic fantasia of desert life, grown not from one but from many, yet never to grow old, an echo of these peoples' thought and of the whole complex structure of desert world. The drums pulsed with live emotion, primal and unconcealed—the force that must persist as long as life is life itself, the force which kindles the cruelest schemes and yet the finest arts and aspirations of mankind.

We came to a massive door set in a high wall; a guttural voice replied to our knock, and a dim wrinkled face appeared behind an iron grille level with the eyes. Slowly, with hinges harshly creaking, the door was opened just wide enough for us to enter, and we could see by the flickering rays of a pendent lantern,

a large open court paved with cobbles. Around this inclosure were the rooms of the Wálid Naïls. Loose curtains hung in the doorways and from some, where light filtered through, came the tinkly laughter of women and the voices of men. The court was like a caravansary, but empty of sleeping camels and caravaneers; a court where men found a strangely different sort of welcome and shelter, yet in structural essence the same as the solemn, cloistered inclosure of a mosque or of a Moorish palace bright with flowers and fountains and verdure. On our right was a door, shut and doubly sealed by darkness, whence came the seductive music.

Bu Saada, "Place of Happiness" and "Queen of the South," is in the native territory of the Wálid Naïls, a mixed Berber tribe of the Monts des Ouled* Naïls extending approximately from Biskra to Jelfa. According to legend, their unusual attitude toward their women had its origin many years ago, when a chief forgave his young and beautiful wife her unfaithfulness during his absence in a time of war. The girls leave their homes when very young to earn their marriage dowries in dance-halls and by the entertainment of men. They always dress as lavishly as possible and wear necklaces of gold coins of which they are especially proud, since the number of coins they accumulate is attestative of their charm

*Ouled: French spelling for Arabic *Wálid*, tribe.

and desirability; many of the Wálid Naïls are very beautiful. I was told that if a child be born while its mother is away from her tribal home, it is brought up wherever she may be at the time, if it be a girl; if it be a boy, it may be given away to a passing caravan, or perhaps grow up in the environment of the dance-hall; some acquire the perversions so openly bespoken in North Africa.

When a Wálid Naïl has sufficient wealth, she may, if she wishes, return to her mountain home, marry, and settle down to domestic life. However, although the sons of her marriage then remain at home, the daughters at a youthful age fare forth to some populous center as did their mother in her youth. From one point of view, this is a rather clever economic scheme; for the collective feminine pulchritude of the village is capitalized at town prices and each girl has the opportunity of "selling" herself not only many times but twice: to the dance-hall and to the subsequent husband. He, with a Berber's love of substantial return, probably manages at least to get and retain most of the dowry—if she has not been murdered on the way to the mountains, with a fatal gift of gold. Her beauty is usually gone after a comparatively few years in the town, and those women who develop more than common business acumen find it remunerative to remain in the dance-halls to

A WALID NAÏL

She may, if she wishes, return to her mountain home, marry, and settle down to domestic life

supervise the further training and dispensation of new arrivals.

We had entered a long, crowded dance-hall; the lights were unshaded, and the air was heavy with tobacco smoke. Along each side of the poorly ventilated room were tiered benches crowded with burnúsed men; a crude bar was on the left, and the remaining floor space was covered with small tables and chairs. Here and there, conspicuous among the closely seated white-robed figures, were the vermilion cloaks of caïds and spahis, the blue uniforms and red caps of a few French officers. Nearly everyone drank coffee, but some were served with liqueurs or a light beer which seemed a favorite beverage.

At the far end of the room were Wálid Naïls in costumes as primly voluminous, despite exotic colors, as Western fashions of the eighties. In contrast to this quaint attire, they wore a profusion of bizarre jewelry, and their hair was covered with spangled veils held in place by gold fillets. On the platform near by, the musicians were seated cross-legged: one old man among them drummed a deep-toned *darabukkeh;* another, pattering bony fingers on a small tambour, peered furtively at the audience; and three younger men blew upon reed pipes, their heads inclined to one side, as if they were listening for notes

no one else would hear; notes muted by the brazen flare of cymbals. And with the treble rise and fall of flutes, the hollow throb and pit-a-pat-pat of drums, a dancer, even more pretentiously appareled than the others, stood swaying and trembling on the platform—twirling a bright square of silk, the "Bu Saada handkerchief," above the head, lowering it, fluttering, just below flirtatious eyes, rippling and jerking every muscle, dislocating the abdomen with each spasm—and sang, to the mad swirl of music, a Beduin love-song in falsetto. Yusuf exclaimed, "I last saw him in Biskra; he is a popular mimic of Wálid Naïls."

Slowly the impersonator sank back and back, until his head touched the floor, and pivoting in this position, he made a complete gyration. One of the men sitting close by placed a ten-franc note between his teeth and leaned over the performer, who, catching a corner of it in his mouth, quickly arose. Bowing in response to guttural calls of approval, he left the platform and made his way through the crowd, accepting gratuities and stopping occasionally to chat and drink with patrons.

The music began again, and I hoped that one of the Wálid Naïls would entertain us, as several were noticeably good-looking. One, a blonde, repeated the previous performance, but she was old and fat—and fatness is not admired in North Africa.

Glancing toward the others, I noticed in particular a very pretty girl slyly scrutinizing me with eyes softly bright in frames of kohled lashes. After a time she crossed the room to us, and, crouching in a little space at my feet, began talking to me in local patois. She was very young, yet her submissive red lips already wore a fixed smile and her voice was cultivated to unerring smoothness. We ordered beer and gave her cigarettes; the caïd to my right made room, and I asked her to sit beside me. Her name was Shwa'-wish. . . . It was market-day, but very, very dull, and she was rather tired. . . .

And as she soliloquized artlessly, the door opened and several more Wálid Naïls entered; every one looked that way, and the name "Fatima!" came in a breathy whisper from all parts of the room; *"Fatima, la belle de Bu Saada!"* said Yusuf. One girl, dressed in white, eclipsed the others; she held herself with unassuming grace, the center of attention from late comers standing near the entrance. Ear-rings, bracelets, and a necklace of tiny gold coins flashed and tinkled with her every movement. . . . Slim, round wrists, a roundness that crept invisibly to her bosom. . . . Black, slanting eyes in an oval face, smooth and pale. . . . A red mouth, smiling. . . . Yet she seemed sad, ignoring her admirers with an air of disdain. "Her lover went away, only to-day," Shwa'wish told me.

Fatima, advancing slowly with the others, noticed Shwa'wish and paused, regarding us intently a moment; then, motioning Yusuf to make room for her, she sat beside me too. As the dancers preeningly arranged their draperies, they exchanged friendly gossip; but Shwa'wish's eyes had darkened. Fatima lighted a cigarette, and after a few rapid inhalations turned to me and unexpectedly began singing in a sweet little voice, nodding to encourage me to learn the song.

Soon, Shwa'wish asked if I would rather go to her room: and as we four left the dance-hall, she hurried on ahead to see that all was in readiness. We made our way toward a bright rectangle of light, where a little boy held the curtains aside. It was a small cubical room, immaculately clean; the smooth stones of the floor were cemented together and whitewashed, as were the walls, and high up beside the door was a tiny recessed window. The dancers stepped out of their slippers, and we sat—around a brass tray on a stool—on cushions and a couch of rugs in a corner. The only other furnishings were a brass bowl and pitcher and a small chest; Shwa'wish's dainty clothes hung from pegs in another corner. It was a remarkably chaste little room.

Setting a brazier near me, the boy attendant blew the smoldering charcoal to a ruddy glow, quaintly bowed, as if rendering each a personal tribute, then

withdrew. In a few moments a servant brought beer and mineral water, which Shwa'wish served with pretty gestures, and half laughing, half singing, rocked back and forth on her heels in childish delight. . . . Scarcely stirring the doorway curtains, a tiny "sister" and handmaiden of Fatima's crept into the room, like a wan little ghost. Cupping a frail hand to her lips, she whispered into Fatima's ear, then huddled down, drawing her bare legs and feet under a scanty dress. The older girl, now silent and brooding, put an arm around the shivering wee creature, and drew her close. Sitting there so quietly, these two made a poignant tableau: Fatima, lovely as white lotus, cherishing a first sadness, was indeed more youthful than her sister, a bud not yet emerged from the turbid depths of the pond. The child could scarcely keep awake. Her eyes, sunken in shadows, brimmed with helpless acceptance of a world she knew untimely well; an expression of unavailing knowledge as is sometimes in the eyes of the very old.

Later, when asked to dance, Fatima responded to the measured clapping of hands with a certain natural willingness, an assurance of training from early youth, and a sense of youthfulness still charmed by a thing not fully understood. She smiled, humming a song as old as the custom of the tribe. There was no subtlety, none of the intricate symbolism and con-

ventionally crystallized technique of Far-Eastern dances, meaningless except to the eyes of the connoisseur. Her movements were a frank expression of primitive emotions—every imaginable appeal in gestures designed for a single purpose and woven into a consistent theme. . . . A direct assault, yet glossed by the personal dignity of the dancer.

For all their amiable chatter as we talked together, they spoke little of themselves. They saw nothing unusual in their mode of life, no advantage either in the customs of their small nation or in the customs of others—just different ways of living. They were ignorant of their age,—for unnecessary calculations were not their habit,—conscious only of their youth. Neither appeared more than sixteen, both were spontaneous, irresponsible, and for the most part happy. Shwa'wish had the more inquiring nature, and asked me no end of questions, most of all about the place I had "come from," and how long it had taken. She had heard of the most marvelous things! Was it really true that there were buildings higher than two or even three of the tallest palms, end to end? At last she said that she would like to go away with me; could she? Would we ride for days and days on a ship? She would like that . . . and she would mind everything I told her. But the most touching incident of the evening was when she confided that

she thought her father was English; her mother had said so.

It was not hard to believe. Her face, though marred by the tattooed mark of her mother's tribe, was rather patrician; her features delicate and fine; straight dark brows, clear hazel eyes, nose small and aristocratic; soft rosy cheeks and smooth amber skin. She looked like a girl of whom that unknown father might, in different circumstances, have been very proud. Fatima, according to local standards, was the more beautiful; she was silkily supple, with guileful black eyes, and skin like a wax petal, golden, almost colorless. Her physical self was a mansion from which curiosity never tempted her to wander, her mood an outer garment, changeable and worn with graceful unconcern: she was instinctively a professional beauty set as an enigma in a world which acknowledged her languorous allure.

The evening had gone quickly; Shwa'wish sharply clapped her hands and almost at once a servant entered with coffee, as if he had been waiting just outside for the signal. While we were enjoying the beverage, a never omittable sign of hospitality, the doorway curtains were abruptly thrust aside with a jangling discord of metal rings along the rods. . . . There, more like a fantastic apparition than a creature of flesh and blood, stood an ancient

damsel, staring at us. Little kohl-rimmed eyes glittered in her painted face. As she advanced, like an evil presentiment, the tall gilded green feathers of her head-dress quivered; anklets, bracelets, and gewgaws jingled with each step. And as if to complete her travesty of queen, a clownishly posturing, giggling Moor, an unusual sight in a Muslim country, capered about her like a court fool.

Fatima regarded the female potentate with hypnotic rigidity; Shwa'wish's face puckered with disappointment at this anticlimax to her little adventure as hostess. But when the woman berated her with hand upraised as though to strike, the girl answered back with futile defiance, a childish protest against the invasion of her "home," then as suddenly bowed in resignation, bound before birth by custom from which there was no getting free. The tawdry queen, extracting from the bosom of her dress a note for fifty francs, dropped it from disdainful finger-tips into the girl's lap, turned, and, followed by her companion, vanished through the doorway—a lifeless wisp of gray cigarette smoke eddying out after them. For the space of a heart-beat we sat very still; then Yusuf and I aroṣe to go: Shwa'wish was engaged. Fatima laughed, and held out a slim, henna-dotted hand to guide me through the court. The dance-hall was silent; a guard held a smoky lantern to our faces before opening the outer door, and, when we had

passed through, it shut behind us with a dismal clang; heavy chains and bars once more rattled into place.

At the hotel I thanked Yusuf for his escort and went to my room, where I found a freshly tended fire. On the mantel was a bowl of hot kus-kus, and beside it a note from Anne, the femme de chambre, asking me to partake of this token of her good-will, and wishing me plenty throughout the New Year. . . . I remembered hospitality earlier that evening too. . . . Shwa'wish and Fatima had been so eager to share their bit of amity and cheer with the world outside their strangely cloistered court. As I sat before the fire, the quivering flames glowed brightly for a while and then died down: I thought again of tiny gold coins flickering in the lamplight with the rise and fall of soft breathing, the spontaneity of the dance, the quick throb of young hearts, the unrestrained emotions; the new ardor of the flames, quickly consummated, quickly consumed to soft gray ash.

The custom of their tribe persists; other phases of North-African life will bear the burden of amelioration first. For the Wálid Naïls are too profitable to the owner of the individual dance-hall, who is not always "native," and too much a part of the country's picturesqueness as a whole. But their dancing may yet become inspired rather than surfeited with the fundamental theme; it has not been long developing

compared with the ages of maturing which make true art. The day may come when "Wálid Naïls" will be more than a convenient term for their impersonators, male and female; and, indeed, an evolution toward a more creditable and complete form of emotional expression would be the happiest redemption which the new years could bring this oddly adapted tribe.

I went out upon the balcony opening from my room, seeking respite from conflicting impressions of the evening. The waning moon, still big and round and white, had risen above the palms; the little buildings were bathed in its pale radiance, caressed by elusive shadows, as though Night had dipped a silver-dripping brush in deep, liquid blue, washed the scene with master strokes, and sprinkled over all shimmering star-dust. The river held the oasis in crescent embrace; no sound broke the silence save the far-away barking of a dog. The tangled skein of life had vanished from this glowing, wondrous space; the spirit-teeming night at last lay dormant for another day. Enough that this was called a "place of happiness"; for the moment it was Beauty, and in the last analysis we can ask no more.

CHAPTER SIX

New Year's Day in the Desert

I was awakened New Year's morning at sunrise by a confused medley of sounds: lutes, flutes, drums, and, in the corridor outside my room, whisperings and the shuffle of slippered feet. Perplexed by a serenade at this unwonted hour, I lay still for a few minutes and watched a sunbeam flickering in wavering uncertainty across the ceiling. No fire had been kindled, nor had the femme de chambre brought coffee; but the sound of music and commotion came from everywhere in the hotel and from the street below. Quickly I dressed and went downstairs.

A crowd of men, women, and children, of all ages and descriptions, were pushing around the hotel entrance, and a din of shrill cries rent the air: "Bon Année! Gib sordie! Bon Année! Gib sordie!" All wailed at once in discordant concert, each with outstretched, upturned palm; occasionally some one howled a few words in English—a hurried, slurred "Happy New Year!" and a loud-drawn-out "Give monee-ey!" which left no doubt as to the meaning of the occasion to them!

Before I was aware, I was engulfed by the crowd. It seemed that every one was eager to bestow personal good wishes at a price; insistent hands were thrust out in tiers, children's lowest of all. Wondering just how far my store of small coins could be made to go, I began putting them into the nearest grasping palms, whose number, alas! never grew less. My clamoring captors made a wall of squirming, jostling figures, their heads bound by rags of every color and discoloration, their bodies wrapped in baránis, some almost new,—white, brown, or striped with color,—others tattered and patched until all uniformity of hue and texture had long been lost. But every one, from the most impish youngster to the oldest beggar, however toothless, dusty, and disheveled, was grimacing gleefully.

When no amount of desperate fumbling could materialize another coin, I glanced up and espied Yusuf, standing at the edge of the crowd and grinning broadly at my discomfort! In another moment he had shouldered his way to my side, evidently prepared for the occasion. From a pocket he took a handful of copper coins and flung them far out into the sandy street. "Quick!" he shouted to me, as the beggars sprawled in a cloud of white dust, a tangled heap of bare brown legs and clutching fingers. As we hastily retreated down the street in the direction of the market, a little boy, all scrubbed and shiny,

BU SAADA

This . . . desert town has a curious flange of low, receding mountains . . . quaint, crooked little streets cobbled or white with sand

in diminutive white burnús and little red chechia with dangly black tassel, left the crowd, to follow us. He had roguish black eyes, and a way of winking with engaging camaraderie; his name was M'hommed. He knew a few words of English which he repeated at every opportunity; they were: "Goh morning! . . . Nice day! . . . Nice shoes! . . . *Gim*me aw cigar*ette!*" And this "*Gim*me aw cigar*ette!*" was a sort of perpetual chant which I came to know and expect regularly. Thereafter, every morning of my stay, when I left the hotel, he would be waiting expectantly. Winking a big black eye, his greeting would be, "Goh morning! . . . Nice day! . . . *Gim*me aw cigar*ette!*"

It was yet early. Across the silvery-blue sky the wind swept fleecy pink-edged clouds, and the shadows of the flat-roofed houses lay across the streets like thin blue veils. Soon we came to a big market-square, where traders were arriving: laden with bulging bags of dates, their garrulously complaining camels were led to patches of trampled but unclaimed ground, unloaded and hobbled. All over the square, merchants already had their wares displayed on straw mats and were shouting guttural vociferations after buyers who, with pretended indifference, turned away. Through confusing heaps of fruits, wool, cereals, henna-leaves, and innumerable other commodities surged the crowd; even empty bottles

and broken glassware were for sale. Donkeys hidden under burdens of firewood moved like animated brush-piles; chickens squawked; sheep and goats ran blindly; tailors stitched on baránis; barbers clutching their victims' heads between their knees, shaved off the hair with dagger-like blades; children begged, snatched bits of food, and scuttled away.

Just after passing a market restaurant, a patched three-sided tent, I was startled by a wrathful howl: "Ahee! Ahee! Emshi!" There was the ragged proprietor, shouting and gesticulating angrily at Yusuf, who, smiling whimsically, was pointing a camera at him. The old fellow had leaped so hastily to his feet that he had almost upset an enormous iron pot suspended from a crane above a fire; it swung back and forth, every moment threatening to spill its steaming contents into the laps of his customers. Suddenly, as if in protest at any further commotion, a sleepy donkey standing near by, laid back its ears and brayed loudly. . . .

With little M'hommed swaggering insouciantly beside me, I hurriedly walked on, hoping that Yusuf could make amends as easily as he had precipitated the confusion. I felt sorry for the old man, but when Yusuf caught up he quietly said, "He is satisfied now, and happier; I gave him money." Yet for all his diplomacy, the film, when finally developed, turned out blank.

Near the edge of the market the crowds multiplied; the maze of merchandise and the endless variety of moving forms merged in color-bright confusion: there were innumerable articles of tooled and embossed leather stained in vivid hues of red, orange, and yellow; intricately worked silver jewelry; fine silks of every tint and shade; gold embroidery; long-piled rugs of many tones and patterns, woven on hand-looms by the women in their homes. This Damascene display whelmed the open square, and the little stalls about *es-suk* were also filled to overflowing.

All at once, M'hommed burst into a torrent of Arabic, forgetting entirely the English phrases he had displayed so proudly. Winking an eye excitedly, he pointed toward the wall of a building: there was a man squatting on the ground, smoking a long, slim kaif pipe. Sometimes a wisp of smoke curled out of his lips and hovered like a faint nimbus above his snowy turban. His face was immobile, tense, his deep-set, glittering eyes unwavering. He seemed studying neither his surroundings nor his thoughts, but some unseen book held before him, a poem of such excited verse that he was frigid with its fury. Motionless and concentrated, this necromancer reveled in weird phantasies untold, while beside him an urchin limply slumbered over the drum on his

knees. A small group of marketers and admiring children waited near by.

M'hommed was chattering away: "Great story-teller! You come to es-suk to-night? Hear all about far countries, all about the great *'ifrit* and the jinn, long time ago. Sometime I will travel much, tell stories, take much money!"

I asked M'hommed if the man was the little boy's father, but with a look of surprise he answered with his characteristic economy of words: "No! He plays the drum. Takes the money. Follows the master everywhere! By night the wall where the master sits is red with a light the little boy keeps burning. He is busy with his drum. The master knows past and future, reads each thought of every one he sees. He speaks only the truth, his eyes glitter, and only gray-beards sit near. I fear him, too. But I am small and hide behind the back of Ibn Maja. Sometimes I peep, the master sees me, his eyes blaze like red light! I crouch quickly down!"

Wondering if "the master" could be persuaded to tell a story, I suggested to M'hommed that he ask; but he replied:

"No. Market too busy. No crowd to listen. Great story-teller!"

However, approaching the motionless figure, he spoke to him several times, with no effect whatever either on the man's rapt countenance or on the sleep-

ing boy, then turned to me and said in a very dejected manner, "He does not listen!"

But at these words the story-teller laid aside his kaif pipe and asked:

"What story will the lady hear?"

I told M'hommed to choose the one he liked best.

"Abú Nizár!" he cried, fairly wriggling with joy. "Tell about Abú Nizár and his camel!" The fabulist smiled tolerantly and then his face resumed its intent expression and he stretched out his hands as though to evoke before us the very scenes and characters of the tale.

"In the Name of Alláh the Most High, and in witness of the greatest of Apostles, our Prophet, I make known to you that before the days of your remembrance and before the remembrance of your fathers' fathers, there was once a man by the name of Abú Nizár, who was journeying with a caravan of his friends in the desert, far, far to the south, journeying from the Sus toward Insalah. The camels were laden with merchandise much finer than any you see in the market here, and his camel was the oldest and the wisest and the strongest. This camel was called El Aqid, the Sure, for even when the best guides were puzzled, he was never known to lose the way, and he was shaggy with age and his back was worn smooth of hair, for he could always carry the heaviest load and endure the longest march, and

his knees wore callouses greatly thickened from much kneeling.

"Now, after weary days of journeying through the driest of deserts, the caravan came at last to an oasis where they had thought to find water, but sand had piled up and covered it, and only a few palm fronds were to be seen, and they were faded and had no life. Many of the men were frightened, for they had heard at the beginning of their journey that the water here was good; nor had they felt the hot breath of the *shorúq** nor heard tidings of any sandstorm. And not knowing what was to be done, they met in council, and at last Abú Nizár spoke in his turn and gave them courage, for this is what he said:

" 'In the Name of Alláh, it was not for me to speak first, for there are those of you who are older and far more knowing in the ways of the desert than I. With patience have I listened, but have heard only words of amaze and fear, and some have said to go back. Now, this is not the speech of brave men. While we speak idly of the strange thing which has come to pass, telling one another what each knows for himself, El Aqid, the oldest and wisest of the camels, does not wander foolishly with the others, nor chews at withered palm fronds little better for a thirsty mouth than sand, nor searches for grass buried

* *Shorúq:* Arabic for sirocco.

fathoms deep by the dune. Look you! El Aqid stands alone, facing south. We must not tarry here; there is water to the south, and it is no more than two days' journey away, though no oasis has been known there before.'

"The first day was filled with hardship, but even with the coming of night they marched on, singing to their camels; nor did they stop for sleep until the moon, lacking but a day for its full strength, drew near its journey's end across the sky. The second day was yet more terrible, for the way was unknown and the camels stumbled and would follow El Aqid only with much urging by their masters. Then even he could go no farther and sank to his knees as did the rest. But Abú Nizár cast aside his merchandise and poured water down the camel's throat and fed him dates from a little leather bag, and the others did likewise for their camels. El Aqid gained strength and rose to his feet and went on, and the other camels were made to follow. Now there was no water-skin which was not empty, and Abú Nizár and his comrades could not sing nor speak, for thirst, but they marched ever southward, pulling on the halters of their camels.

"At last the caravan came suddenly upon a green oasis and they quenched their thirst and set the camels free to feed plenteously, and then the time came for evening prayer. They made their ablutions

with water and their hearts were filled with wonder at the greatness and goodness of Alláh. The palms were laden with ripe dates, larger and more golden than ever seen until that time; but night came quickly and the men put off the picking of the dates until the morrow. They made a little fire, for the light of the moon was strong and clear and the desert could be seen for a great distance from all sides of the oasis, and there was little danger from the stealthy approach of enemies.

"And they sat about the fire, and when each had eaten a bit of food and washed his soul free of every care with clear water, Abú Nizár played upon his flute as was his custom, and they were content. The notes of the flute were sweeter than ever before and his fingers more nimble, and the song of the flute was new, and none that he had known until then. So strangely sweet was the music that his companions grew quiet; nor told stories, nor gossiped, nor laughed, as was their custom. Abú Nizár played on, and soon, one by one, his comrades rolled themselves in their baránis and slept—all save one that sat on Abú Nizár's left, nor swayed with the music, nor sang, nor said aught. And the little fire burned as if new, growing neither brighter nor more dim.

"Now, Abú Nizár had not seen which of his companions this one was, but he played on, even more sweetly than before, and was pleased that there was

AN OASIS POOL

They made a little fire, for the light of the moon was strong and clear and the desert could be seen for a great distance from all sides

one that liked the music—more pleased by this one than if all the others had kept awake. At last his fingers grew weary with their playing, and he stopped and asked the one to his left if he knew any of these tunes, for he had not heard them before, himself. And there came no answer. And Abú Nizár looked more closely by the light of the little fire which burned with an unfailing flame, and saw that the man wore a white burnús which he did not remember among the baránis of his companions, whiter than any seen before, and the hood was drawn forward so as to hide the face. Again he asked if ever sweeter music had been heard from a flute. And there came no answer.

"Abú Nizár, who had not known fear when the oasis buried in sand had been found, now lost his courage. He counted the sleeping ones about the fire: they were all there, all the companions who had set out with him from the Sus to journey to Insalah, all who had lost their merchandise and saved their lives by following his camel into the south. And then he turned to the one on his left. He made one more! Abú Nizár's flute dropped from his hands; no words came to his lips, though he would shout to those who slept. With great caution he moved to the right around his sleeping companions, and then stared across the fire at the one that sat silent beside the flute. The burnús was white and did not redden with

the glow of the coals, the hood was drawn forward and raised to a sharp point. But for face there was only empty shadow, the form was motionless and did not breathe, there were no eyes gleaming in the fire-light, no beard showing black against the white burnús.

"Abú Nizár could only whisper the Names of Alláh the Most High and the name of the Prophet. A pale light trembled in the black shadow under the hood of the white burnús, a pale light like the smoke of burning incense, and then the figure vanished, except only a thin spiral as from a live brand thrust into sand. Muttering prayers as fast as his lips would quiver, Abú Nizár crept again around the sleeping men and with shaking fingers reached for his flute. But his eyes fastened on the spot where the one to the left had sat, for there—"

At this point the little boy with the drum suddenly woke up—perhaps his master's toe had something to do with it—and automatically held out the drum in front of the eager little crowd, now more numerous, that had been listening. M'hommed's mouth, agape with excitement, snapped shut and he plucked insistently at my sleeve lest I neglect the numismatic significance of the by-play. When the drum had completed the circuit, the story-teller, as if unaware of any pause, continued:

"There, in the hollow made by a sitting form, was

the single print of a camel's foot lightly pressed in the sand. And Abú Nizár full well knew that print, for it was the print of the left hind foot of El Aqid, the oldest and the wisest of the camels, that had faced south from the oasis covered by sand and had led them to the oasis of green!

"The great fear which had come upon Abú Nizár now doubled and trebled, yet he would not believe the evidence of his eyes. He went to the spot where the camels lay sleeping, but El Aqid was not among them; nor could he be found anywhere in the oasis; nor were there any tracks leading away into the desert. And he returned toward the sleeping camels, and when he drew near he thought he saw El Aqid among them. But lo! it was the merchandise heaped in the sand, the merchandise which had been cast aside to lighten the camels before the green oasis had been reached. Now Abú Nizár forgot his fear and his heart was glad, and he turned to wake his companions and tell them of all these strange things. But he could not move nor utter a sound, for what he now saw was stranger still. There his companions were sleeping as he had left them, but the fire was gone and no ashes remained, and the oasis had vanished, and before him stood a young man clad in white and holding out the little leather bag from which El Aqid had been fed dates on the desert. And the young man spoke these words:

"'These are golden dates from the oasis which has vanished, and you and your companions will journey on, and you will find again the way which leads from the Sus to Insalah, and your trading will be good, and you will return at last to your homes with many riches. But the dates are for you alone, and should you ever again be without water on the desert, the planting of one of these dates will bring forth a green oasis and cool springs. And the palms will bear fruit such as I give you now, which will nourish you more than a costly feast and will fill this leather bag again.'

"They prospered even as the young man had said, but Abú Nizár never had need to use the dates, for his fortune was good, until one day—But that is the story of the jinn of the sand-storm and of how the golden dates were stolen, and cannot be told until to-night, when the day of trading is finished and the torch flickers red, and the men gather in the shadow of this wall to hear what I will reveal to them then."

The story-teller took the kaif pipe from the little boy, who had lighted it for him, and a wisp of smoke curled out of his lips and hovered like a faint nimbus above his snowy turban. His face was again immobile, tense, his deep-set, glittering eyes unwavering.

IN A ZAWIYA

A monastery for neophytes and a focus from which the fraternity may spread its doctrines

CHAPTER SEVEN

Other Aspects of Bu Saada

Bu Saada is a painting,—living, changing, prolific in color,—a painting that has been copied by a generation or two of artists, not in veneration as of old masters, but for the joy of experiencing its vital loveliness actively and personally through the medium of their art. This epitome and ideal of desert towns has a curious flange of low receding mountains; a river; an oasis; quaint crooked little streets cobbled or white with sand; typical Arab dwellings of sun-dried brick plastered and whitewashed; sand-dunes and that other kind of desert—arid plains covered with pebbles, nodding tufts of dry grass, thorny brush, and glittering salt.

Accessible, beautiful, livable, it offers an edgewise view of the Sáhara, yet escapes the frightening height of central desert sky. Daylight is white and clear, an exaggeration of the north light of a studio; colors are airy and brilliant, real and accurate and paintable—not so glamorous as the rich colors of the Kasba of Algiers, not so weird and shimmering and

impossible as farther in the desert, where at noon all color is lost in a blinding glare.

And this oasis has one surpassing glory: as the sun sinks into the desert—far across the shadowed dunes, yet brilliantly near—a flood of color dyes delicate clouds on the horizon, the wind-sculptured sands, the hovering mist, the town, the oasis, and swiftly saturates the very atmosphere . . . pale topaz, golden, green, amber, then flaming orange, rose, ruby, deeper and deeper . . . until everything is immersed in a vast blur of liquid blue, except in the western sky, a fleeting afterglow of starlit violet.

Of the various features of Bu Saada, the one most in contrast to its essential character as a town in the desert is a trip of a league or two, up a steepening road, to the little sacred city of El Hamel, terraced on a mountain spur above a deep, verdant valley. The road crosses narrow bridges spanning small models of the gorges in the Jurjuras farther north, and then steepens again, up to the white fortress of El Hamel, surrounded with a stout wall and surmounted with mosques and the domes of other sanctuaries, the tombs of the marabouts. It is a very quaint fortress, for here is welcome for every one, and hospitality for the visitor, whoever he may be—except, of course, during the fast of Ramadán.

The venerable *háji** who, like most important Algerians, is decorated with the cross of the French Legion of Honor, is the spiritual and temporal head of this little city, and presiding marabout; a sage associate in any discussion, and a ready friend. During the first five years of the present century and for some time before, this position was held by a woman, Lalla Zineb, who carried on the work of the previous marabout, her father, Muhammad ibn Belksem. Her portrait is accorded great reverence, and her tomb is one of the most important shrines. The town has a number of schools where little boys learn the Qur'án by reciting in unison, and opening upon the court of the *záwiya,* a sort of monastery, are the bare cells of the men who aspire to enter the order of marabouts. Within the tombs, the shrines are shrouded with rich silks and a mystic dimness unlike the quiet sanctity of the interior of the mosque itself.

El Hamel is a capitol of the marabouts, the hermits and priests and saints of North Africa, who have a great deal of influence, particularly among the Berbers. And the spiritual aspect of this race is symbolized to a certain degree by the desert mountain upon which the significant little fortress is situated, like an island in the tide of Islám, the religion of the Sáhara and of that other desert land across the Red Sea. The office and title of marabout are usually heredi-

* *Háji:* One who has made the *Hajj,* the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

tary, once the neophyte has finished his training at the záwiya and has proved his merit by some act of extraordinary faith or has been credited with a miracle. As the marabouts are supported by their followers, considerable family fortunes sometimes accrue for the saintly descendants, depending on the reputation of the sire and the policy adopted toward the spiritual heritage. Marabouts are credited with magical healing and frequently dispense amulets, a few cabalistic words on parchment or paper which are worn in leather or silver cases on strings about the neck. Their tombs are regarded as shrines —the square, domed white kubbas seen particularly on the hillsides of the country.

Organized into numerous religious fraternities, these men have played an important part in the history of North Africa, notably in their resistance to French invasion and penetration, and still have a dominant rôle in the local councils of the Berbers. Each village has its marabout, a sort of patron saint (the descendants of the more illustrious often found little sacred towns apart, like El Hamel), and disputes between villages as to the relative excellence of their saints have led to many of the feuds prevalent among Berbers. But through the organization, the local influence of the marabouts extends like a subtle network as a means of communication and control over far larger regions.

The word marabout (French for the Arabic *murábit*) comes from *ribát*, a fortified post on a frontier, and was first applied to any Muslim gaining distinction in foreign wars while so stationed. The term did not come into common usage, however, until the rise of the Almoravides (*al-Murábitún*), Berbers from the desert who dominated North Africa during the eleventh century and who are now best represented by the Tawarik. Among this fierce tribe, and other Berbers, the marabouts still form a distinct and privileged caste. But their more priestly qualities have become dominant, and the ribát has developed from a frontier post and barracks into the záwiya, a monastery for neophytes and a focus from which the fraternity may spread its doctrines, religious and political, among the people.

These doctrines, varying with the individual fraternity, have a common origin in a Muslim sect anteceding the marabouts by about two hundred years—the Súfís. Dissatisfied with the material aspect Islám was assuming under foreign influence at that time, these people sought to regain the old spirituality by a life of piety and renunciation of worldly things. The Súfís (from the Arabic *súf*, "wool"), so named because of their unassuming attire, were at first indeed wise and pure men*, but

* *σοφός*, "wise," and *safá*, "purity": appropriate but mistaken derivations of *Súfi*.

gradually foreign influence undermined their simple, righteous habits, and at last, disregarding the words of the Prophet, they adopted the practices of hermits, mendicants, monks, and saints.

Although the Súfís never went quite so far as to establish nunneries, there were among them numerous ascetic women (like the late Lalla Zineb of El Hamel) following the doctrine of mystical love expounded by Rábi'a al-'Adawiyya of Basra, a female leader in this interesting aberration of Islám. To the faith so clearly formulated by the Arabs, the Súfís brought a complex mysticism and pantheism originated by Ma'rúf al-Karkhí of Baghdád, a Persian and the son of Christian parents. Other Persians, as well as Egyptians and Syrians, introduced further monkish and ascetic extremes from Christianity, theosophical and occult speculations from Neoplatonic and Buddhistic thought. And the Súfí priests were marshaled into a hierarchy similar to the Christian priesthood, with a sort of pope called the *Qutb* or "Axis," believing himself in direct communion with God and regarding as the spiritual wheel of the universe the organization of saints he controlled. Finally, these developments, all entirely foreign to Islám, reached their lowest ebb of fanaticism with the dervishes, the *faqírs*, and their inhuman ecstasies.

There are now thirty or forty secret brotherhoods

of Súfís, of whom a large number have their centers in North Africa. Of these the more fanatical, usually Berbers and negroes, are commonly known by the name of the individual fraternity: for instance, the snake-charmer Aïssawa of Morocco. Other Súfí fanatics practise extremes of self-scourging unequaled by Christian monks like the Flagellants—a method of inducing devotional frenzy which has become a part of nearly every religion, even from the time of ancient Egyptian rites.

The marabouts, although they are also Súfïs, have sought more the original ideals of purity and wisdom: they are hospitable and frequently cultured men, usually a good influence among their people, and an indispensable aid to orphans, widows, and others of the poor or infirm. In this way they act as a medium for one of the cardinal principles of the Muslim faith—charity. But their saint-worship, shrines, miracle-making, holy pictures, the silks and gold embroidery adorning their woolen baránis, and their dependence for support and their priestly grip on the religious feelings of their followers—all are alien to Islám and have been derived from other creeds. And in North Africa, the home of the marabouts, their influence is felt chiefly among a race which has been exposed to a plethora of foreign beliefs and superstitions—the Berbers, successors of the Almoravides, the original marabouts.

But there is one fraternity, founded by a member of a noble Arab tribe, which has returned to the primal simplicity of Islám: the Sanúsiyya. Sanúsí found his inspiration in the Sáhara and among the Beduin of Arabia, and, in the three generations since his death, this brotherhood has become the dominant spiritual force in North Africa; the strength of the Sanúsiyya, now numbering ten millions and more, has remained in the unsullied expanse of the desert.

To look upon Bu Saada from a hilltop is to gain a very happy impression of the town as a part of its diversely pictorial surroundings, and yet to feel even more keenly its broader perspective in the endlessly ramified, superimposed world of man. In the streets themselves there is at first a sense of inordinate detail, a sense of narrowing from the wilderness of space where man has come most clearly to understand what is meant by God and has gained the greatest benefits of this transcendent concept. But in the world of cities and towns, although cramped and artificial, man and fellow-man have come to harmonize and gain the greatest benefits of each other. And this was really how the diversity of the human world began; for men were more the same when they all roamed over the earth and without their walls of artificiality came face to face, each one for himself, with what was meant by the un-

changed world of God. Only when people in large numbers grew up together in the same spot did they build their walls and intensify their own peculiarities as different races, by living to themselves rather than to the world at large. Yet in the narrow little streets of Bu Saada the broader aspect is regained: these homes, and the larger home of the town itself, are not artificial so much as intensely human; homes which are different from those of other peoples, but different only as a variation of the theme of humankind.

The rows of windowless, flat-roofed houses are like so many white-robed figures sitting close together with their backs to the versicolor concourse of the street: men in cowled baránis, brown or striped, donkey-drivers and scampering children in anomalous garments of many hues, women draped in multifold white, a bickering vender or two, and housewives on their way to the river, balancing bundled family washing on their heads, with long fringes of bright-colored kerchiefs dangling before their faces in place of the conventional haïks, making pretty contrasts to their black, red-patterned shawls and dresses. The houses are varied now and then by an external staircase leading up to a second story or to a roof seldom in line with the next; but outwardly they are all very much the same, taking no heed of the visible activities of the town, nor altering this

attitude toward the less frequented byways which, as they go down steep inclines, become flights of shelvy stone steps. And inwardly, each house is an inviolable dwelling, an irrevealable home, similar in structure to its neighbors, but as distinct from them as they are all reserved from the half-voiced business of the streets.

Above each threshold the wall juts out perhaps a foot and in the projection is a small square of iron grating through which any one inside may see who asks to enter. A friend knocks on a stout old door ornately studded with hand-wrought nails. A voice answers; he gives his name, and the door opens into a small entrance flanked on each side by a recess heaped with colored blankets and cushions. Here he is cordially received by the father or son of the family, passes the time of day or gives a message, and continues on his way. But should the friend be a woman, she is conducted along a narrow corridor at right angles to the doorway, to the interior of the home,—unseen from the entrance,—and accorded hospitality as a guest of the family. Perhaps in a small open court she is offered bread and honey and a gourd of milk, and gossips with the womenfolk while they resume their tasks in a large central room ventilated and lighted from above; ladder-like stairs lead up to a narrow balcony adjoining the sleeping quarters, and to the roof-top where the family gath-

ers of an evening. The living-room is cleanly swept and bare but for a few benches and the simplest necessities of housekeeping—earthen and metal cooking utensils, and great jars of provisions. Waterskins hang in a corner, bright-red saddle and bridles are in another; beside one wall is a large loom where a young girl is weaving on a rug, and two older women are busy near the enormous fireplace which reaches almost across one side of the room. . . .

So it came about that in one of these homes I was welcomed with pleasant words and smiles and gestures. When I was seated, the eldest resumed her baking of flat round loaves of unleavened bread: raking out a bed of live coals over the hearth, she covered them with an iron sheet on which were placed the plats of dough. The daughter of the house fetched refreshments—dates and coffee—and her mother talked with me:

"Why do you come so far alone? . . . Is your home empty of happiness? . . . Where else can a woman's contentment be found? . . . How will you be received when you return?" . . . Such was the theme of her inquiries. And it was difficult to make her understand how any woman could find pleasure in traveling in a foreign country—or, indeed, any reason for such a departure. . . .

To look upon Bu Saada from a hilltop is to gain a very happy impression of the town as a part of its

diversely pictorial surroundings. . . . But in each dwelling is an even broader aspect, an aspect of privacy and busy contentment—foundations for any home in this manifold world of mankind.

I had planned to take Shwa'wish and Fatima for a ride, in return for their hospitality on the night I had gone to the dance, and one day, soon after luncheon, they were beside me in the tonneau of the motor-car, while an Arab accompanied Yusuf on the driver's seat. Gaily dressed for the outing, Fatima again wore white silk, with narrow pale-blue ruffles trimming her bodice and voluminous skirt. The clear amber of Shwa'wish's skin was enhanced by the apple green and bright dark blues of her dress; and sleeves of creamy lace hung gracefully to her wrists. Their hair was sleekly braided and hung over their shoulders beneath silken haïks and heavy golden gauze interwoven with bright colors. Gold coins strung on fine chains dangled from large hoop earrings; prettily fringed kerchiefs, necklaces, bracelets, ornamental belts, and anklets completed their gala attire. One of Fatima's bracelets was a heavy band of crudely chased silver bristling with pegs nearly an inch long, designed as much for protection as for ornament—a bracelet which on occasion may be a Wálid Naïl's only defense against plunder.

On our way out of town we stopped at a café to

get glasses and beer for the picnic. While we were waiting for Yusuf to fetch them, a burnúsed Moor and a dapper young man, with Continental clothes and corseted figure, turned the corner; had I not been told, I should not have recognized this dandy as the native impersonator from Biskra, whose dancing we had witnessed a few evenings before. The Moor came up to us and, calling the girls by name, tried to engage them in conversation, but with becoming reserve they covered their faces with their haïks, and drew back in the seat. He soon turned away and joined his companion who was lounging at the bar of the café.

A few kilometers from the oasis we stopped in a narrow ravine, La Gorge des Aouinètes, where limestone cliffs and hills clad with shrubs and distorted trees closed in on each side of the turbulent Wadi Bu Saada, spanned by an old stone bridge a little way up-stream. Only the cool murmur of the waters gave voice to the still, wild beauty of the scene, somber despite a brilliant sky. As soon as we were out of the car, the two dancers asked to have their pictures taken, and then we climbed down over the rough boulders to a pleasant spot shaded by tamarisk, beside the sparkling stream. Shwa'wish and Fatima chattered and laughed—pretty, brittle laughter like tinkling wind-bells—and in graceful manner showed their appreciation of the excursion. They

seemed all the more the care-free children they really were—delightful little pagans for whom the moment's happiness was sufficient. Fatima was blissfully forgetful of the lost love that had made her so despondent only a few days before; Shwa'wish, formerly so wistful,—as if longing for finer things than she knew, aspiring toward a more luminous life,—was now entirely unconcerned and gay. And so they chatted and smoked innumerable cigarettes.

After a time their voices became subdued and serious, but they spoke so rapidly that I understood very little: I asked Yusuf, and he interrupted his talk with the Arab, listened a moment, shrugged his shoulders, made a few eloquent gestures which informed me of nothing, and said:

"Ou! They speak of one of their friends."

Then, noticing my interest, Fatima related, with pretty pantomime and occasional volleys of words:

"Not long ago a young noble, the son of a caïd, came from afar to visit friends in Bu Saada, and he was very brave and handsome, but as yet unfamiliar with the ways of the town. One night he went to a dance-hall with his friends and there he saw a young girl of our people, who was very young and very pretty and who had not long since come from her home in Jabal Amur and found all the new things about her very strange indeed. She longed for her home and for the happy life in the mountains, she

was lonely and frightened, yet so beautiful that he felt for her at once a great love, and because of his tender words and vows of unfailing faithfulness, she came to love him too.

"Every day he came to her, only to love her more at seeing her again; and, for each moment of awaiting, her heart filled with a new joy upon his return. But the time came when at last his purse was empty and no longer had he money to keep her for himself alone. He had sent messages to his father, imploring of him aid, but the caïd, although he was rich, was dismayed at the long absence of his son and sorely troubled by ignorance of the reason, and sent him neither gold nor anything which could be exchanged for gold, fearing that his son had met with evil companions. Only did he send entreaties and commands to return quickly. Nor would the friends of the young noble help him, for they thought him mad.

"But he loved her even more deeply, and could not suffer a day to pass without sight of her, and so one by one he sold his belongings, keeping for himself scarcely enough of the money to buy a bit of food. And now the caïd had been reached by tidings of the need which had come to his son, and of the reason therefor, and he was grievously oppressed by this knowledge, but his pride was great and he sent a message to his son, commanding him to return ere the moon had waned another quarter, or

else forgo his birthright. But the young man valued nothing but his love, and for her he sold his fine clothes and his camels and his horse and even his weapons, though he esteemed them highly. But the money was soon gone, even though she secretly sold the gifts he had given her. Then at last he sold his most precious belonging, a red leather hunting-belt embroidered with the finest of gold and silver threads. For a few days more they were happy, and then he went away."

"But where did he go?"

"Oh, nobody knows that!"

"Did he take her with him, and was he ever able to buy back the hunting-belt?"

"No; they are just gone."

By the time the tale was told, shadows blended beneath the stunted, twisted trees, and across the stream yawning caverns seemed to effuse the darkness now slowly rising in the ravine. The sky changed from a luminous pale green to golden, the cliffs and hills were gilded with orange light, and from these hills, so silent all afternoon, came a shepherd with his flock and a dog which barked savagely. Farther along the river, rose a spiral of blue smoke from a hidden camp-fire; a breath of wind unwarmed by the sun, crept chilly by.

It was almost dark when we had climbed up the hillside to the automobile; Shwa'wish and Fatima

THEY WANTED TO HAVE THEIR PICTURES TAKEN

FATIMA WAS BLISSFULLY FORGETFUL

were soon as blithe as ever, and as we rode back to Bu Saada they asked if I would come to a special dance which they could arrange for me that evening.

We met Shwa'wish and Fatima again at nine o'clock and they took us to a dance-hall, larger and more attractively fitted than the one we had visited before: pierced-brass pendent lanterns gave a soft, shadowy light; brass trays and low divans with many cushions were arranged around the walls; at the farther end of the hall were a number of men, and in a little group apart sat a circle of Wálid Naïls; with them, Shwa'wish and Fatima took their places. The air of prosperity and Eastern elegance was apparently due to European business methods, under the management of a modishly dressed Frenchwoman. White-robed musicians huddled near the wall at the other end of the room, and to the pelting roll of drums, the quick-noted rill of reed flutes, a much bedizened woman danced and sang, the sameness of the plaintive music frequently varied by weird, tremulous cries from the other Wálid Naïls. Rapidly patting their mouths, they shrilled their voices . . . a sudden flight of sound, quickly shivering into silence, a cry of exultant primitive woman, eager in excitement, be it dance or wedding or war.

The singer was a beauty of Bu Saada; or, rather, a faded beauty of the year before. When her per-

formance was ended, the proprietress came up to me and asked:

"You will see the girls dance nude, madame?"

Yusuf leaned toward me and whispered:

"That is what Shwa'wish and Fatima have arranged for you; their highest compliment, too!"

Across the room, these two were happily beaming at me, taking my confusion for pleasant surprise. And so I nodded my assent: Shwa'wish and Fatima, with four others of the prettiest dancers, left the room; the musicians turned toward the wall, drew the cowls of their baránis low over their faces, and waited quietly; the Arab spectators got up and left; while the doorkeeper hid his face in his arms against the wall. The dancers had gone to disrobe; and an Arab does not look upon a nude woman in public.

The proprietress stood near the door until the girls were ready, then touched a musician on the shoulder: the flutes lilted with new sweetness, the drums beat apace, and the six girls clustered in the amber twilight of the room. . . . Now the world was young again and maidens danced before pagan altars to celebrate the season's sacrifice: as if life had been breathed into the nymphs of a Grecian urn they danced, self-absorbed, enwrapped in some mystery of their own unfolding—seductive and entrancing. Upon their half-averted faces flickered shy little ghosts of smiles: now they bore votive offerings

with uplifted arms, then slowly lowered them, empty of gifts. Fascinating was the synchronous symmetry of their dancing; intricate, unhesitating, the weaving pattern of lithe soft-hued bodies and limbs, as again and again they fashioned rhythm into new themes, new garlands of grace. And then, awakened suddenly from enchantment, they hurried from the room with a patter of little feet. . . . Too soon the imagery was gone; only the music still throbbed on, an echo empty of song.

A moment later Shwa'wish and Fatima were asking with childish eagerness if I had liked their surprise. "Were we as graceful as the other girls?"

Such was their dancing, and such the current of their lives—like bright threads in a lover's hunting-belt, weaving patterns which if once broken cannot be completed, can scarcely be begun again. And I wondered, should I ever see the young caïd's belt, if at the end of its embroidered design there would be a broken silver thread, frayed into two pretty, lifeless strands.

One day I asked an Arab of my acquaintance if it were permissible for me to go up to the roof of one of the mosques for the view. He was a learned, kindly man.

"It is permitted between the hours of prayer," he said, and very courteously offered to escort me on

the morrow; for that afternoon he would be busy with his pupils, teaching the art of writing and the science of grammar.

And so, the next morning, we climbed the spiral stairway of the minaret and stepped through a narrow door into the full sunshine on the roof. I sat upon a coping and the Arab likewise, his baránis of unbleached wool flowing from the wrist of his lean brown hand as he gestured toward this point and that, telling of the seven mosques of Bu Saada. Each had a story, and his family had helped to build the one where we now were sitting. . . . And there were other things to speak of: one of his youngest pupils had some skill in writing verses. Indeed, the boy had shown him a poem a day or so before—a pleasing poem that spoke of the sky as a great bell, with a golden tongue to tell the hours of the day, a softer, silver tongue for night. . . .

The white buildings of the little city about us had a glow and sheen as of clustered pearls beside the quivering spread of palms; and beyond, tawny dunes rippled endlessly away. To the north, flat-topped hills made smooth blue shadows against the cerulescent sky. My companion's sun-bronzed face was calm and cool with thought. . . . I spoke of the many who come to visit in Bu Saada, and to trade.

"Yes," he replied, "soon we shall have as many visitors here as go to Biskra." There was a sugges-

M'HOMMED

M'hommed had acquired an amusing accessory, another little boy —but very dirty and bedraggled, like a neglected dark angel

IN THE WADI

Regularly it would come careening against its mother and demand a halt for dinner

tion of displeasure in this answer, and I asked him why . . . for the people seemed happy.

"We prosper, that is true," he made answer, "but often in unseemly ways. And there are other things. . . . Know you, what I say is not unkindly; yet you may observe that our roofs are no longer the unseen windows of our homes. They who come, we often feel, view our mosques as if to reckon how better minarets could be made, or admire them as if grown there like palms. Sometimes we ourselves feel like strangers, strangers of uncommon strangeness. Even in the great mosques of Tlemsán and Kairawán it is we, of course, who worship, but I have heard that the language of the Qur'ân is thought uncouth. . . . We prosper, that is true: the desert has not destroyed us, the sword has not cut us off, nor are we slaves."

I asked a question, which he said was not for him to answer; and we were silent for a while. When we rose to go, he stood for a moment, looking across the desert, breathless beneath the ascended sun; voices from the streets below came to us in subdued, flowing murmur. He began to speak again, and his voice seemed evolving into words this continuous human sound:

"God shows us a far view, and the distance flatters us. Seeing one small corner of the desert, we think that we are wise. So it is with every tribe and race of man: they view the sea and calculate her

moods, or a rim of blue hills absorbs their speculation. Only Alláh knows why we have been fashioned in this way. He sees before Him the evidence of the ages . . . all things great and small . . . all things human . . . the Beginning and the End. We but know that many pages have been turned, their deeds recorded; nor can fretful thoughts divulge the future, nor hasten the reading by one day."

One afternoon I told Yusuf to hire camels for a ride along the river. This met with unexpected opposition: he declared that I should ride a camel,—he would certainly get one for me,—but for himself he preferred a donkey. However, this seemed a trifle quixotic, so, with complaining groans from both Yusuf and the camels, we finally mounted and started off; the owner rode another dromedary and the driver walked along, carrying a stout staff. Little M'hommed stanchly trudged beside my mount, reaching up ever and anon to pat my shoe and remarking conversationally:

"Goh morning! Nice shoes! *Gim*me aw cigar*ette!*"

My camel was a light-grayish female, and her most recent calf, a gangling, long-legged creature, awkwardly ambled by her side or kicked up its heels sportively as it veered in circles of cautious adventure, getting in everybody's way. Regularly, it would come careening against its mother and demand a

halt for dinner; our progress was somewhat spasmodic. And, incidentally, M'hommed had acquired an amusing accessory, another little boy, but very dirty and bedraggled, shuffling at a safe distance behind him, like a neglected dark angel.

We came to the river, at this season hardly more than a brook, which divides the oasis, and rode along the wide channel. On both sides were luxuriant gardens and soft-toned walls dappled with the shade of tall palms and feathery foliage, and bright with flowering vines. On one bank was Dinet's palm-shaded studio, a tiny, white-domed house with a pretty balcony overlooking the channel—now a colorful strip of Algerian life, which this artist has painted with such distinction for nearly a third of a century.

Red flowers grew in bits of soil among the rocks of the river-bed, and rivaled in color the bright silk kerchiefs of women busy with their washing; squatting on white stones along the shallow stream of crystal water, they sluiced garments up and down in the deeper pools, or, holding their billowy skirts high, trod the clothes until fluffy, sparkling suds mounted above their slim ankles. And they would look up from their work, smiling . . . a flash of white teeth, pretty lips, dark eyes behind the kerchief's dancing fringe. Some, balancing bundles on their heads, were still coming, and a few poised be-

side the stream, deciding which pool to choose. A wizened old woman squatting on the sandy bank made an instinctive gesture of veiling her face as we passed; she watched a comely maid at her washing, stamping diligently with a dainty clinking of anklets. Children played about, dabbling in the stream, skipping from rock to rock, and shrilly shouting to one another. A young spahi, deeply bronzed by desert sun, was cheerfully laundering for himself a modest surplus of attire, his brick-red burnús laid aside in a crumpled heap. And the chatter and laughter of these people blended happily with the burble of water as it hurried away the soapy rainbowed bubbles.

A caïd rode past on a richly caparisoned, prancing horse; straight-seated in a gold-broidered red saddle; austere and proud, yet with an air of easy grace, sharing in the body-joys of the working folk and in their deeper feelings for this life. Torrential sunshine blazed on his scarlet cloak while the horse caracoled along the channel, then curveted and galloped free-rein around a bend. We turned from the river-bed and its bright-illumined page of life: soon the camels' feet were sinking deep in cushioning sand, glinting saffron beneath a burnished sky. The desert surged away like a golden mantle flung out in glorious disarray, and melted in the fervent blur of the horizon. . . .

In a world so vast, perfect in magnificence, Bu Saada's little handful, however perplex their problems, seemed petty atomies indeed—a world whose soaring sun and far-starred heavens have frightened man with his own short span, his littleness in time and space and strength. Yet, no more wonder in the very great than in the very small. Nor can compare all lifeless might with any living thing; the sun's full sway of power touches not the fragrance of a single bud, fragrance which cannot be weighed, nor made, nor ascertained as anything but fragrance. Nor can compare all life with one least perception of this life; a single thought of little M'hommed, as he happily looked up at me, was more vastly perfect than all the spacious grandeur of the desert. And the wind, as it passed over Bu Saada in one continuous being and touched with its tresses the full sweep of billowing sand, seemed to whisper, "Alláh, Alláh, Alláh!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

Across a Saharan Plateau

THE Sáhara is a great inland continent, virtually as large as Europe, larger than the United States or Australia, and as varied in surface and soil. . . . Valleys and depressions one hundred feet below sea-level. . . . Plateaus at an altitude of three to six thousand feet, with immense flat or rolling surfaces of denuded rock, the *hammada*, or loose stones and sand of the *serir*, sometimes tufted with dry grass and brush. . . . Numerous and dissimilar barren or sparsely wooded ranges, some of volcanic origin bespoken by extinct craters and lava-beds, others with snow-topped peaks over two miles high. . . . Plains whitened with salt, and rocky deposits of this article of the age-old caravan trade. . . . Salt lakes and lakes where the water is only brackish. . . . A central, mountainous plateau, Ahaggar Tasili,—as large in area as the Alps,—which forms the "water-parting" of the Sáhara, radiating dry channels (with waterworn bits of lava and shells of fresh-water mollusks) hundreds of miles out into the sand-dunes.

. . . And there are oases, and larger patches of country not so fertile. . . .

The Sáhara itself was never a distinct ocean-bed,—its sand is readily distinguished from sea-sand,—but large portions in the north were once flooded by the Mediterranean, and in the south by the Atlantic, according to such evidences as limestone deposits and marine shells. At the time when these waters had withdrawn or dried, the Sáhara was a fertile tropical country, joined through West Africa to the West Indies and South America by a wide strip of land over which many prehistoric vertebrates reached the New World. And that the Sáhara was prolific at a much later period, has been proved by fossils of hippopotami, crocodiles, rhinoceroi, elephants; the camel is a comparatively recent Arabian innovation. But the increasing dryness, which has grown greater even in historic times and will probably continue to do so despite various plans for irrigation, has created the Sáhara as it is known now.

Those prevailing winds which are not offshore are usually from the Mediterranean, but they bring little dependable rain to the desert, because it is in a lower latitude; these winds usually reach the desert during the hot season, and the coastal mountains —an important but not decisive factor—have already reaped a plentiful rainfall. The resulting dryness causes quick and extreme changes of temperature

from day to night and from summer to winter; the freezing-point is often reached, and the maximal variation is sometimes as high as 125° Fahrenheit. Consequently, the bare rocks have been cracked and crumbled, great slabs have been split off and shattered by their fall, and the sand and constant winds have polished and worn away the rocks still further, scoring the cliffs and carving the rocky remains of old plateaus into weird shapes.

So has the sand been powdered and swept into the *erg*, a desert of dunes. Although such deserts make only about a ninth of the total area of the Sáhara, they cover a large part of regions like the Libyan Desert, equal in size to France, Italy, and Spain combined. Saharan dunes in general run south-southeast and north-northwest, at right angles to the prevailing winds—sloping in the direction of the wind and falling off abruptly on the other side. Commonly sixty to seventy feet high, some of the largest *gerns* (peaks) reach the height of three hundred feet, and even, it is said, six hundred; permanent sand mountains, each with its own name. During the day, there is nearly always a breeze, enough to raise a smoky swirl of sand on the crests of the dunes; and with the full-blown shorúq of the sand-storm, the dunes themselves may very slowly move, with a characteristic singing, creaking sound, while clouds of red dust mount thousands of feet into the sky

ON THE MARCH

Along almost every road penetrating the Sáhara is a caravan trail

A SAHARAN CARAVANSARY

and are often borne across the Mediterranean to European shores.

But the dunes, popularly considered the desert, lend themselves most practically to attempts at irrigation (except the plan for an artificial inlet of the sea, possible, of course, only for regions below sea-level); to reclaim the rocky hammada is not worth consideration. By means of artesian wells,—which have been dug in the Sáhara for the past two thousand years,—modern engineering methods may now irrigate large sandy areas. It is an interesting detail that the water which rises from these wells often contains small fishes, crabs, and fresh-water mollusks, a fact which indicates that the subterranean reservoirs—fed by the rain and disappearing rivers of the coastal mountains, and held under pressure by impermeable layers of marl—are yet in some way kept aërated.

Another method of reclaiming the desert depends on the small amount of free moisture which is present beneath the surface of the sands. This moisture is also derived from rainfall on the distant coastal mountains, for many of the oases which are not watered by artesian springs have an average annual precipitation of only a very few inches and may flourish for years without any rain whatever. By this method—not so extensive or so successful as that of artesian wells—the dunes in valleys and depres-

sions, where the free moisture is sufficiently near the surface, are covered and fixed with halfa-grass, making a foundation where may be planted such trees as tamarisk, acacia, Eucalyptus, prickly-pear, peach, and aspen poplar, the most reliable. Halfa-grass is one of the characteristic growths of arid regions of the desert, and, in contrast to the plant life of the oases, is particularly well fitted (by its narrow, thick-skinned blades and especially adapted stomata, or breathing pores) to survive the high rate of evaporation and dry sandy soil. It grows naturally in gray-green isolated clumps, and although useful for fodder only when young, its long, willowy, fibrous leaves and hairy stems have been utilized for weaving and rope-making since prehistoric times, and recently have been manufactured into paper.

Human life on the Sáhara is largely dependent on the fruit of the tens of millions of date-palms. But in the oases are also cultivated apples, oranges, citrons, figs, grapes, pomegranates, grains like barley and wheat in the winter, and in the summer, rice, *dukhn* and *dhorra*—varieties of millet. Besides domestic animals, which are sometimes of local interest (like the black cattle of Adrar), there are wild asses, the *yarbú'* (jerboa, a jumping, nocturnal rodent similar to the kangaroo-rat), the *faneq* (fennec, a small fox with unusually large ears), jackals, sand-rats, hares, three species of the *ghazál* (gazelle), and six

or eight other kinds of native mammals. Moreover, in some regions, baboons, hyenas, and mountain-goats may be found.

In addition to numerous migratory birds, there are about eighty species characteristic of the Sáhara and its oases, including ostriches, desert larks notable for their song, and various buntings. Besides many lizards—chameleons, geckos, and skinks—there are tortoises, venomous snakes like the horned viper, innocuous reptiles like the python, and edible frogs. And in the brackish waters of North-African oases are many fish, the common variety resembling a small pike.

Most of these plants and animals are distributed, regardless of altitude or other variations of habitat, over the greater part of the Sáhara, and in general are related to the northerly species of the Mediterranean. But in the southwest corner of the desert the old tropical fauna and flora still predominate.

In the Sáhara the most impressive achievement of man is the network of caravan trails, some worn deep across the undulating stony waste, others through the deserts of dunes where only the eye of the adept may find the way. A few existed in prehistoric times, but their development and utility reached the maximum during the many centuries of Arab leadership; recently, of course, they have become somewhat neglected. There are about nine or

ten old routes (and several newer, notably the one established by the Sanúsiyya between Wadai and Tripoli, via Jalo) forming the skeleton of the time-honored caravan trade from such centers in the south as Timbuktu, the Nigerian states, Lake Chad, and the Sudan, across the fourteen hundred miles of the Sáhara's breadth, by way of Insalah, Ghat, Ghadames, and Murzuk, to the cities and states of the Barbary coast, supplying them with gold and ivory of central Africa, the salt of the desert, and the dates of the oases.

As Timbuktu formed a center for all trails going west, north, and east, so did the north-central oases of Insalah, Ghat, and Ghadames serve as foci for travel and commerce in every direction, although usually north and south. But by far the longest and most interesting of these ancient routes, and one now largely abandoned for an easier way by sea, is the trail of the pilgrims to Mecca, who marched from Morocco by way of Insalah and Ghadames to Cairo, —a passage across the desert of three thousand miles, greater than the entire length of the Mediterranean, —only to journey on another thousand miles before reaching the Holy City. . . .

But besides these main routes, there are hundreds of others, and along almost every road penetrating the fringe of the Sáhara is a caravan trail. So it was that as we left Bu Saada one morning and started off

Main Caravan Trails of Sa

SPAIN
ALGIERS
CONSTANTINE
TUNIS
KAIRAWAN
ORAN
BISKRA
FEZ
TAHERT
TLEMSAN
EL AGHUAT
CASABLANCA
AIN SAFRA
TUGGURT
MOROCCO
TUNISIA
GHARDAIA
WARGLA
TRIPOLI
MOGADOR
MARRAKASH
IGLI
EL GOLEA
BONJEM
TIZNIT
ALGERIA
GHADAMES
SOKNA
RIO
DE
ORO
INSALAH
AKAOLI
TENDUF
AHAGGAR
MURZUK
GHAT
TADEN
JUMMO
EL-SHINGEN
TAUDEM
TIBESTI
KAWUR
FRENCH
WEST
AFRICA
AIR
BILMA
TIMBUKTU
AGADES
BORKU
SENEGAL
BAKEL
NIORO
AGADEM
GAMBIA
KAYES
NIGER
BIR ALAH
GHANA
OSEGU
SOKOTO
ZENDER
PORTU
GUINEA
KUKA
KANO
GOLD
COAST
IVORY
COAST
DAHOMEY
NIGERIA
SIERRA
LEONE
LIBERIA
CAMEROONS
EQUAT
AFRICA
BATA

INDICATES THE OLD PILGRIM TRAILS
INDICATES MAIN CARAVAN ROUTES OF THE SAHARA

SCALE OF MILES

200 100 0 200 400 600 800 1000

haran Pilgrims & Traders

Compiled and arranged by the Author

for El Aghuat (about one hundred and fifty miles to the southwest), our road was companioned by a caravan trail, at times scarcely visible, as if traced by a finger across the sand. And yet it seemed more significant than the mighty roads of Rome, which had mastered the mountains only to falter and fail at the desert's edge; more significant, perhaps, than modern military roads taking their place, but, with all the armamentarium of engineering, going only a little farther into the desert.

I again rode beside Yusuf, wearing my warmest coat, with a thick burnús over it as an added protection against the cold morning wind. Soon Bu Saada was hidden behind a line of low hills; the road wound like a dusty ribbon across the pebbles and sand of the serir, sparsely quilled with grayish thorny brush; to the left were mountains sharply outlined, clear blue. And ahead, the Sáhara imperceptibly rose to a lonely undulating plateau. Occasionally, in the distance, a caravansary or the brown and reddish-orange camel's-hair tents of nomadic tribesmen—drooping from central poles to lesser props, and pegged around the edges to the floor of the wind-swept desert. . . . Sometimes, near the road, we passed a solitary shepherd, usually an old man withered with years of tending his little flock—a migratory life in search of scanty pasturage, and ever hopeful that rain (as it does here in the spring, and

may at other times) will dissolve the arid crust of hidden fertility and bring forth a miraculous carpet of green, strewn with the yellows and blues and purples of wild flowers.

A few camels silhouetted against the sky-line, then passing beyond. . . . The great expanse about us, more and more lifeless. . . . Far away, bare hills and even the smallest objects stood out with surprising distinctness, as if magnified in the bright, clear air. A bird sat strangely motionless on one of the pyramids of stones which marked the way, though a falcon was spiraling above it like a malignant speck in the sky, swooping lower and lower with each narrowing circuit. When we were near enough, we saw it was a little owl, marooned on its hazardous perch. Blindly blinking in the glare of sunshine, it shrank away helplessly from the sound of our passing. . . .

I began to wonder why I had left Bu Saada for the uncertainty of regions beyond. . . . Bu Saada, with its good-natured crowds gathering about each motor-car which arrives or departs . . . The solicitous *maître d'hôtel*, his wife, and the guides in their cleanest baránis, who hop on the running-boards even before the automobiles come to a stop, each delineating inducements to buy his services. . . . When we had left early that morning, several other parties were also going, although not our way. And as each

motor-car started off, there had been jovial banter and farewells. Little M'hommed had been there with his usual greeting—"Goh morning! . . . Nice shoes! . . . Nice day! . . . *Gim*me aw cigar*ette!*" To the last moment he had stood on the running-board, begging to be taken along. Then, as the automobile gathered speed, he had jumped off, and giving me a most knowing wink, shouted an entirely new remark in English, "I meet you aw 'Merique! Goo'by!"

Travelers in Algeria grow accustomed to this attitude of personal concern and friendly interest in their affairs, and come to expect it. . . . But now, as we drove on and on over the bleak plateau, even Yusuf was quieter than usual. Soon he said to me: "You like all this? Come, let us drive the silence away! Sing with me the songs of Fatima!" And, to imitate the drums, he pounded on the door of the motor-car as we sang in the way of desert people. Soon we were both in better spirits. The sky was serenely blue, remote; yet, for the first time, I noticed a low, ominous rumbling, like distant thunder, which seemed to pursue us. I asked Yusuf what it could be. He listened a moment without appearing to hear anything unusual, and regarded me rather anxiously: "Is Madame feeling quite well?" Suddenly, to my chagrin, he laughed, then told me that the noise

came from the tins of petrol stored in the tonneau for emergency use, as they joggled against each other!

By noon, we reached Jelfa (Arabic: Jawi) and stopped for an additional supply of petrol. This walled and fortified town—a French army station and a trading-center of the Monts des Ouled Naïls—lies on a very flat plateau, with an elevation of nearly four thousand feet, about twice that of Bu Saada. A railway extends almost directly south from Algiers and, passing through Blida and Boghari, has its terminus in Jelfa. But the only other mentionable characteristic of the town itself, besides the large European population, is an exceptionally wide main street!

We were directed to a petrol station, where we soon became the center of a crowd of dirty, ragged children. They began climbing all over the automobile, plucking at my clothes and begging for money. Remonstrance did no good, and I finally drew the cowl of my burnús over my face, huddled in a corner of the seat, and tried to ignore them. Although to give alms is a holy thing, especially in a Muslim country, the Western custom of giving tips in return for the simplest acts of courtesy has demoralized the people, notably the children, of the frequented parts of North Africa. One does not mind continually giving *un sou,* but there is no way of es-

caping its monotonous reiteration— alternating with "Gib sordie!"—until an oasis less blessed by the new civilization has been reached.

During the morning's journey, we had seen no other travelers, but when we had driven for a time along the military road to El Aghuat, a rapidly cumulated cloud of dust loomed before us, and I wondered what manner of centipedal—or, more likely, centicyclic—monstrosity was approaching. Soon a double-decked motor-lorry snorted by, seeming to enjoy its mad career as much as the burnúsed men so incongruously crowded in and on it, grinning with smug complacency—as if they were not only the lords of sun, moon, and desert, but the lords of motor-cars as well. Indeed, Arabs make excellent chauffeurs, and many of the more wealthy own automobiles.

Then once more we were alone on the desert, flat and expressionless. . . . A few more barren, distant hills . . . The sun burning with increased warmth . . . But a cool south wind blew against our faces, droned ceaselessly across the waste, singing a drowsy canticle of joy and moody freedom. Very far away over the ruddy, sun-sparkled sand, penciled and tufted with coarse withered grass, was a flame-lipped, golden brim. . . . Vague and pendulous against the whitened border of the sky were dust-clouds filtered with tawny light. . . . And far

ahead hovered a vaporous band of liquid blue—a mirage, a trembling unreality.

We had traveled six hours since breakfast, and, beginning to think earnestly about our luncheon, I asked Yusuf when we were going to have it. At first I was pacified by his ready assurance, "Ou! Pretty soon." But, as we drove on and on, the journey was beginning to lose its glamour. As my questioning became more insistent and his answers less reassuring, he changed his stereotyped reply to, "When we find a good place."

Finally I said: "Any one can see that there are no good places, or any other kind of places; everything is precisely the same!"

Yusuf brightly replied: "*Alors!* We stop over there." But in the direction he vaguely indicated from time to time, I could see nothing unusual. . . .

That morning, Anne, the femme de chambre, had prepared the luncheon we took with us: stuffed larks, roast pigeon, gazelle sandwiches, cheese, paté de foie gras, a loaf of French bread with goat butter; oranges, mandarines, dates, for dessert; and, to stay our thirst, red and white Algerian wine and mineral water! And now, vainly trying to relieve my acute emptiness by compression, I slumped down in the seat and began a greedy enumeration: Gazelle sandwiches! . . . Paté de foie gras! . . . The viands, which earlier in the day had seemed more than abun-

dant, were by this time only worthy prizes for a rapacious appetite! But still we drove on and ON. Yusuf's "over there" was a cruel myth. Although I had lapsed into suffering silence, he treacherously inquired:

"Have you ever eaten stuffed larks?" And again, "Do you like roast pigeon?"

Then, at last, we stopped where the road had been leveled through a solitary mound.

Only after the first few mouthfuls did I begin to appreciate the niceties of the meal, served by Yusuf from the running-board. The banks of the mound, partially sheltering us from the wind, were of coral-colored gravel, containing many dry snail-shells. While we were eating, a little ragged old woman came along—thin and shriveled and bent under a heavy bundle on her back, but carrying no staff to help her across the seemingly deserted desert. Her hungry eyes took note of every morsel of our repast, but when we offered her sandwiches she hesitated, and had to be repeatedly assured that they contained no "pig," before she would take any. Once convinced, however, she accepted a handful and some fruit, mumbled a jargon of thanks, and meandered off down the road, munching.

When we resumed our journey, we last saw her some distance farther along the road. I wondered where she was going, as we had not passed even a

caravansary for at least twenty miles, and there was no sign of human habitation as far as we could see in any direction. (She had declined our invitation to ride.)

Yusuf remarked guardedly, "She was a hungry old woman."

"Yes," I readily replied, "but where *could* she have come from?"

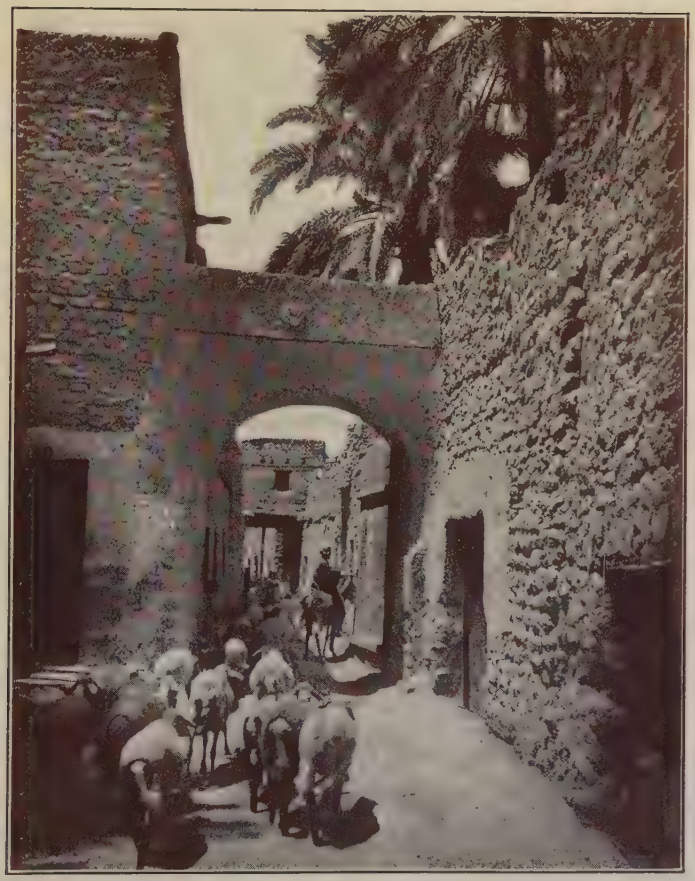
"Perhaps you would not mind if I told you?"

I waited expectantly, not catching the twinkle in his eye. Finally he began:

"Ou! It is not well to keep secrets on the desert, where everything can be so plainly seen. . . . How many things might be spoken of! . . . But as for the old woman, I can tell you nothing. *Alors!*"

Late in the afternoon, after crossing a wide, empty river-channel, we arrived at the oasis of El Aghuat, Arab town and trading-center. Soon we reached a fine little hotel in the foreground of a luxuriant palm garden. Over the white stuccoed Moorish walls vines clung like delicate tapering fingers; tea-tables were placed invitingly in the shady flower garden inclosed by a low iron fence; and along one side of the road clear water flowed through a narrow cement channel—the *seguia*, somewhat incongruously called "the grand canal."

The manager of the hotel hastened to make me welcome, and sent a pretty little Arab femme de



AN OASIS STREET IN SOUTHERN ALGERIA

chambre, another Fatima, to show me to my room . . . large and comfortable, with cool green walls ornamented by narrow lines of black, red, and gold around the moldings . . . and a bathroom resplendent with black and yellow tiles! Fatima built a fire in the little tiled stove in a corner of the room; and when I had changed my clothes, she brought me dinner.

Windows opened directly on a grove of palms, and orange-trees grew close to the walls below. . . . The sun was setting in a brassy sheen of color; a gentle breeze rustled through the fronds and leaves; and a slender young woman in flowing robes dipped a jug in the smooth shadowed ribbon of the canal, spreading ripples of black and flashing sun-gleams. . . . I heard a faint noise behind me, turned, and found that Fatima had put an oil-lamp on the table and was now sitting on the floor, trying on my shoes, those terrible yellow "Nice Shoes" which little M'hommed had so earnestly admired!

CHAPTER NINE

The Story of the Arabs

El Aghuat has long been a frontier post of the greater Sáhara that from desert mountains reaches away for many, many leagues to the south, in an uneven expanse like a shoreless, ungoverned tide. Flanking the oasis—a tiny cynosure beneath the intangibly exalted sky—are a few dunes, planted here and there with struggling tamarisks; within these sandy limits are fertile irrigated patches sown with grain, vineyards, groves of date-palms, *botm* (pistachio) trees, and trees bearing peaches, figs, apples, apricots, pomegranates, and every kind of citrous fruit. In season, matchless roses blend smooth, clinging fragrance with tenuous breezes; the cool shade of white-walled gardens regales the spirit . . . brightly flowered, green, stippled with mirroring pools and glimpses of the sky. Often there are fantasias: exhibitions, by the spahis, of horsemanship, shooting and military maneuvers, vivacious displays of pivoting color.

The surrounding country abounds with game—

bustards, and many other kinds of birds, gazelles, jackals, hares, and an occasional guepard, or chetah. There is, consequently, a good deal of hunting, of which the most interesting type is the falcon chase of the nobles. El Aghuat preserves the open, airy charm of the best type of Arab community—clean, and pretty, and lovable. True, there is a French section, forts and barracks for the soldiers, but there is no begging, at least from foreigners. It retains the simplicity of the oasis—sparkling, fresh, richly vital—in a desert haunted by the ethereal loveliness of the mirage.

Everywhere in the town there is an absorbing multiplicity of local detail. From all over the immense territory to the south, many caravan routes lead to this port of the desert, where most of the trafficking is carried on in a broad sandy street running the length of the town from the old Bab-es-Shergui ("Gate of the East") to the Bab-el-Ghrarbi ("Gate of the West"). Here may be found any object conceivably of use in this region: rugs and *jerbis* woven in patterns peculiar to El Aghuat; fabrics somber and gay; leather cushions and pouches from Bilad-es-Sudan ("Country of the Blacks"), amazing in their intricacy of color and design; high-backed, ornate red saddles; embroidered leather called "fillali"; and all sorts of feminine trinkets. Pottery and metal cooking utensils, and Beduin apparel of every

kind, help to make a various and unusual assortment, hung from walls, spread on the ground, and crammed into tiny stalls. A great pile of old automobile tires puzzled me until I found upon inquiry that they were cut, split, and used to make an inexpensive grade of bábúsh, as the wide-soled, heelless Beduin slipper is called!

Camels, donkeys, goats, and sheep are driven hither and yon through the medley of merchandise, adding to the fascinating confusion. Merchants, traders, Arabs in varied garb mingle with veiled Tawarik men, proud caïds, and Nubian slaves. Wealthy Arabs in gloriously colored fluttering baránis gallop past on spirited horses with flowing manes and proudly flaunted tails.

Public scribes lend diligent ear to the whispered messages they quickly write on rolls of parchment, each message to be borne by a personal conveyor, stranger or friend, to some distant oasis or to the coast. So these ever important epistles are made precious. As the picturesque unlettered author stoops beside his crouching amanuensis—an almost priestly repository of secrets—and carefully chooses words most clearly to suit the meaning, he has yet a feeling of uncertainty. . . . Is the one to be entrusted, really trusty? . . . Will the caravan safely reach its destination? . . . And the artist-scribe, as in lissome Arabic he pens, it seems, the very gestures of

his prompter, the rhythm and grace of passers-by, is writing, perhaps, with a mind apart from the whispered phrases—as though from this public place, from his view of these people, he inscribes a more understanding, more permanent message on his scroll of parchment. . . .

A market scene in an oasis . . . this is the starting-point of desert life. And to tell what desert life has done for North Africa and for other lands,—in the present age and in the past,—the story of the Arabs should be told. The Arabs of El Aghuat and of similar towns find in the Sáhara a reflection of the primeval desert life of Arabia and a parallel with its nomads of to-day. But the qualities of this race could have been developed only in the Arabian peninsula—the link of civilization and commerce joining Asia, Africa, and Europe even before the Aryan invasion of India, and the source of a long succession of peoples from the very beginning of history. Africa, despite its physical magnificence and its single great contribution to the eminence of mankind, lacks the unique formative forces of its Eastern neighbor.

Six thousand years ago, Sargon subjugated the Sumerians of the Euphrates Valley, dominated the crown of Arabia from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, and made his capital at Babylon (*Bab-*

Ili, "Gate of God"; *al-Iláh*, *Alláh*, "the God"). Later Babylonians and Chaldeans reached their summit under Khammurabi, remembered for his Code of Laws and for the full development of Mesopotamia's irrigated fertility. The Hebrews began their eventful career, and the Elamites, and the warlike Assyrians who built Nineveh and its library. Phenicians gained supremacy on the seas, developed their alphabet, made Tyre and Sidon centers of their far-famed commerce, and founded Carthage. And then, the last Semites to surpass the confines of the peninsula, came the Arabs.

The mysterious origin of all these peoples, surging to the meter of millenniums out of the magic pouch of the desert, is explained by the very structure of Arabia. The South is fertile, to the north are the gardens of Mesopotamia, but the body of the peninsula, with its sand-swept interior, is almost barren. So, in a general way, this desert resembles the Sáhara. Yet the arable sections of Arabia have always been very limited, crowding and contest accelerated the cycles of civilizations, and the surplus population was forced to adopt the nomadic life of the desert. And, since the fruitful areas of both North and South were too readily expanded by irrigation (depending on a rather fickle rainfall), large portions of fertile land would soon become

barren with increasing aridity or a disaster to the irrigating system.

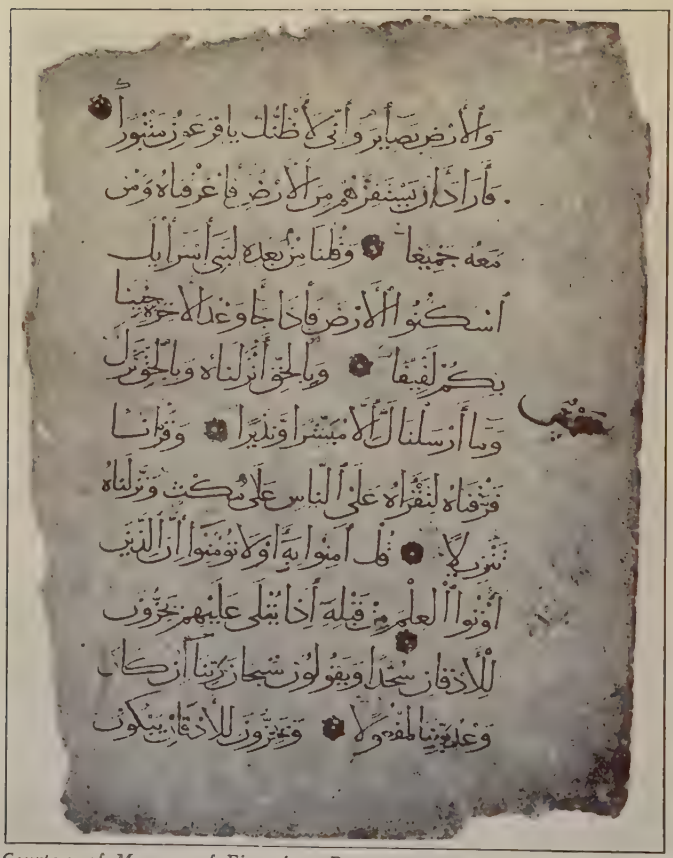
Of necessity, droves of blighted people then fled into the desert, to find in the length and breadth of Arabia some means of sustenance in the oases or to be buried by the sands. Nomads, who had previously drifted for generations over the interior, had come to love the freedom of desert life, and had been steeled by its pitiless impoverishment, were driven before these desperate migrations . . . perhaps to burst upon some other people, wealthy, cultured, and settled, at the other end of the peninsula. Such is Arabia: Death-trap, Witch, and Mother of civilizations.

The Arabs were the last brood of the desert, and the longest tempered and retempered by its privations. Their evolution was from three antecedent groups of Semites, molded by endless nomadic cycles into racial unity. The first group, the original people of the South, were probably partially Hamitic—like the Egyptians—and established a civilization nearly as ancient. They enhanced the treacherous fertility of their land with dams and aqueducts; cities were builded from the granites, marbles, and porphyries of their domain. Their temples and castles were works of art: even on outer walls were sculptured men and curveting horses, wild beasts, gazelles,

eagles and vultures swooping on their prey. Sea trade brought spices, gold, and precious stones from Ind; across the end of the peninsula they carried even peacocks, monkeys, and other Eastern curiosities for the Pharaohs and nobles of the Nile, shipped them rare incense and myrrh from South Arabia itself.

These South Arabs, the first to dominate the deserts of the peninsula, conquered Babylon and 'Iráq (Mesopotamia), marched to the bounds of Ind, and ruled Egypt for a century and more as the Shepherd Kings or Hyksos. The Arab Queen, Bilqis, daughter of Sharáhíl,—the Biblical Queen of Sheba,—visited Solomon at Jerusalem, enriched by caravan trade with South Arabia. And this trade, with all the neighboring nations, used gold, silver, and copper coins, graven with heads of long-haired kings of old Arabia. On a hill girdled by a thirty-foot elliptical wall, was the Temple of Ma'rib; the great dam of Ma'rib was one of the wonders of the ancient Arab world. And there were castles like Ghumdán: a stronghold twenty stories high,—each wall of different-colored stone; roof and windows of alabaster, —guarded by hollow lions of brass, that roared when the wind swept through their cavernous bodies, like living models of the kingly beast. . . .

Then these people—speaking and writing the most archaic Arabic, gifted with culture of which but scanty ruins and inscriptions now remain—were



Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

OLD QUR'ÁNIC MANUSCRIPT

swallowed up in the arid wastes of Arabia. Perhaps because the trade from India changed its route, going entirely by sea around the peninsula. . . . Or because nomads, constantly stealing in from the north, brought war and neglect of irrigation. . . . Or, as Arab legend relates, because of the breaking of the dam of Ma'rib. And perhaps Arabia herself, in desert mood, reached out sandy fingers, choked the streams of the aqueducts, swept back the people into the desert, and left their country to wither and decay. North of al-Rub' al-Khálí—that terrible Solitary Quarter across the width of Arabia—fields of ruins, possibly burial mounds, have been found near el-Afláj. . . . But the South lived in the memories of tribes roaming as far as Syria and 'Iráq, who often became the aristocracy of the regions they invaded, and who contributed to the poetry of Pre-Islamic days a wealth of legend and tragic glory.

Another primal group of Arabs were essentially of the desert, although their leaders may have come from 'Iráq, perhaps driven out by war or some disaster similar to that of the South. Absorbing or destroying their predecessors and leaving many settlements in the oases along the way, they poured down over the peninsula to its southern extremity, where at first they settled peacefully; then, after the fall of the ancient culture, they renewed the irrigation and rose to power. Ya'rub (Yareb), first Yemen

prince of these original Arabs (ʿArab ul-ʿÁriba) is said to have given his name to the whole peninsula and its people. Another ruler, Saba ("Capturer"), is remembered in the words "Saba" or "Sheba," and "Sabæan," applied anachronistically to the earlier South—whose language, with similar inaccuracy, is known as Himyarite, from Himyar (the "Red"), a king of the second group of Arabs so named for his red cloak copied from the Pharaohs'. The monarchs of these ʿArab ul-ʿÁriba built up again the prestige of South Arabia, but never equaled their predecessors. However, they were at least ostensible masters over the peninsula until the end of the fifth century, when the desert tribes won complete independence. By then the South was again declining; was conquered by the Christian Abyssinians, and, just before Muhammad, by the Persians.

The last group were the "naturalized Arabs,"—Abrahamitic or Ishmaelitic Semites, already well Arabized in ʿIráq,—whose leader, Ibráhím, had been expelled from Chaldea very much as had ʿÁbir, first chief of the "original Arabs." Peacefully settling at first as immigrant traders, the Ishmaelitic Arabs gradually climbed to ascendancy, checked only for a time by the invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. They made Mecca their capital, and the center of a caravan trade to Byzantium, Syria, South Arabia, and Ind. And Mecca became the center of

the primitive religious rites of all Arabia, receiving pilgrims from every part of the peninsula, and giving some semblance of monotheism to the mythology and degenerated Sabæanism of the tribes.

All these peoples were mingled and made one in the cyclic surge and ebb of desert life; still they honor Najd (the highland wastes of northern Arabia, girdled by the red sands of Nafúd) as the cradle of their race. This was the Pre-Islamic era, a latent period in the life of the country. . . .

But meanwhile civilization again rose from the desert. The sections of Arabia approximating the domains of Rome and Persia became buffer states, Palmyra and Híra, between the two empires, and held back the desert Arabs (who alone of all the "Near East" had not paid tribute to Darius). For a century and a half the ancient oasis town of Tadmur was a city of brilliant pomp, Palmyra—so named by the Emperor Hadrian at the time of his visit, 130 A.D. Here the Aramean alphabet was still used—parent of the modern Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew, and at that time had been the commercial alphabet of Asia for a thousand years. Half of Rome's annual trade with the East—pearls, perfume, jewels, and silks, valued at one million gold *solidi*, about five million dollars—passed from India and Cathay* by

* Cathay: the Tartar name for China, presumably introduced by Marco Polo.

way of the Persian Gulf, through the desert and Palmyra.

A triumphal arch spanned the street past the Temple of the Sun—a street sentineled on each side by a mile of rosy limestone pillars capitaled by statues commemorating heroes of the caravans. And on the hills circling Palmyra were the tombs of governors: "Houses of Eternity," as they were consecrated—family mausoleums for every generation until the last. . . . Some were tower-sepulchers like Kasr eth-Thuniyeh, a hundred cubits high: six stories of coffin-chambers for five hundred honored dead, above the subterranean vault beneath the base. And some were single chambers with rich porticos and mural sculpturing in stone, the portraits and Arab names of venerated men.

Strange does it seem that Rás Tadmur, the Arab "chief of Tadmur" who marched his army to Madá'in (Ctesiphon, the Persian capital), was commander of the Roman legions in the East. But he was the Prince of Palmyra whom Emperor Gallienus subsequently titled *Totius Orientis Imperator* (Independent Emperor of the East). Then Bathzabbai his widow, styled Zenobia ("Life of Zeus") by the Romans, ruled Palmyra. And Palmyra ruled Arabia, Asia Minor as far as Chalcedon, across the Bosporus from Byzantium, and Egypt (270 A.D.). So in less than a century and a half an ancient oasis town

reached out for empire . . . and three years later was destroyed. Strange it was, and yet significant.

Despite the swift evanishment of Palmyra's power, despite the constant warring, the seemingly hopeless multiplicity of tribes, small oasis towns, and growing coastal cities, the Arabs were unconsciously building up a national unity, focused on Mecca. By holy truce, no war marred the Hajj to Mecca (the eleventh to the first month of the year), nor the lesser pilgrimage, 'Umra of the sixth month. Nor during these four months did war disrupt the trade to Mecca, mid-point of Arabia's Red-Sea coast: fine horses from Najd; saddlery and trappings from Híra; grains and martial gear from Syria and the North; rich leather-work and garment-stuffs from the Yemen South; sea traffic from Æthiopia, and from Ind well-tempered blades and musk. . . .

And Mecca soon surpassed the neighboring Hijáz cities, for she lived by the Quraysh, noble families of North-Arab blood traced back to 'Adnán, an intellectual nobility: the future Prophet, the future Caliphs of Medína, Damascus, Baghdád, and of Spain. . . . Meccans centralized the undeveloped religion of Arabia before Muhammad, founded friendly intercourse with the peninsula and with far countries, and nurtured the beginning of civic, even national, loyalty—to replace individual family pride. And Meccans were the isolated few who first wrote

Arabic, the common bond of all the Arabs: not the dead language of the South, nor of its subsequent invaders, not even the Aramean Arabic of Palmyra, but a new unison of speech, rhythmic and strong as desert life itself.

For centuries this language lived only on the lips of its people. (The Qur'án was not compiled until twenty years after the Prophet's death, possibly later, and the old poems did not take their place in written literature until Islám was nearing empire.) But the Pre-Islamic age of primitive desert life—*Waqt el-Jahiliya*, "Age of Ignorance," as even Arabs call it—was later to be known as a golden age of poetry, recited as a final test in market gatherings of Mecca. The allness of Pre-Islamic art—every morsel of beauty, every surging of their creative spirit—was fashioned into rhythm that crystalized the long story of their origin, painted an epic picture of nomad life, and was sustained, molded, and perfected by unnumbered repetitions, generation after generation. When this talent came to light in one of their sons or daughters, the whole tribe feasted and rejoiced.

Then, in the last twenty years of Muhammad's life, a miracle was performed. Arabia became a nation; the shaikhs (leaders, but not rulers by unquestioned right) and their tribes were knit together by their Prince and Prophet. A century later this unity,

Islám, had settled its mantle over a vast dominion, across India to Atlantic shores. And for ten centuries Islám made civilization, welding East and West, the races, the continents, and the seas. . . .

On the west bank of the Tigris, the Round City of Baghdád was builded on the site of Baghdadu, founded three thousand years before by Semites from Babylon—the Gate of Alláh on the Euphrates across the way. And the Golden Gate (the caliph's palace) and the Great Mosque were centered in the three concentric moated walls round Baghdád. The old Babylonian tower, Akerkuf (now desolately crumbling above the barren plains), looked down upon a city of canals and overflowing gardens; a city which in seventy years, since builded by Mansúr the caliph (762 A.D.), grandfather of Hárún al-Rashíd, had brimmed over to the opposite bank; a city comparable in size to modern Paris (and Paris was then a little island in the Seine, the seat of Frankish counts, the prey of Norman pirates).

In East Baghdád, soon superseding the Round City, was a "Chinatown" with silks, bamboos, and curios of Cathay. In other bazaars were fish-bone needles* from the Northland of the Svears (Swedes); and Russian sables, ermine, and marten furs. For these, Baghdád traders had given metal

*The Arabs later introduced steel needles to Europe, where they were manufactured first in Nuremburg, in 1370 A.D.

mirrors of polished steel, silver and bronze, sheer fabrics, spices, and jewelry, to the gentry of Europe —and harpoons to the fisherfolk of the Baltic Sea. In still other bazaars: porcelains, enamels, glassware, linens, damask and brocade, the perfumes of water-lilies and orange-blossoms, the attar of roses. . . .

In 751 a Cathayan army had stormed Maraqanda (Samarqand, under Arab rule since 711 A.D.): they were repulsed, pursued, and among the prisoners taken by the Arabs were some who knew the art of making paper. A factory was built in Maraqanda, another in Baghdád, then many more throughout the Muslim realm; and paper—a secret from the world for centuries behind the Great Wall of Cathay—was made of rags and linen and silk, with every tint and quality and surface. Perplex palimpsest, costly parchment and papyrus soon gave way to paper; and now the first art taught to each aspiring youth was the art of Arabic script itself.

Arabic, made uniform and almost universal by the Qur'án, took to itself, as well, all previous art,—of Persia, Greece, India, Rome,—and caught up on its virile stem the contributions of every race of creative power at this period. There was Arabic from West Africa to the Far East (where Arabs had first settled in 628 A.D., when Wahb Abi Kabha, an uncle of Muhammad, had made presents to the Chinese emperor); the Pilgrimage to Mecca gave knowledge

of the peoples and places of the world. Wherever the Muslim traveled, across this third of the earth, Arabic was the key to every mosque; and wherever the master taught, the student could go to learn; Arabic was the vehicle of culture and learning, the nearest approach to a universal tongue the world has ever known.

Analytical thought and objective experiments made foundations for modern science. Astronomical comparisons of observations, from widely separated points, revised Ptolemy's tables and other previous knowledge of sun and moon, stars and planets. Comparatively few important fixed stars are now known by names other than Arabic: Algol (*al-Ghúl*, "the ghoul" or "ogre"), the monster-star; Betelgeuse, the "Abode of Orion"; Vega, the "falling" star . . . Arabic was written from nadir to zenith (*samt ar-rás*, "way of the head," zenith; *nazír as-samt*, "corresponding to, opposite, the zenith," nadir). Arabs first used mineral acids. They named and perfected algebra; *al-Jebr-wa 'l-Muqábala* ("The Transposition and Removal," i. e., of terms of an equation) is the name of a treatise by al-Khwarizmi, librarian of the caliph al-Mamún (809-833); which was used in Latin translation as a text-book in Europe until the sixteenth century. The mariner's compass was used by the Arabs, and later guided European explorations to the New World. Physics, geography, medicine,

and surgery were systematized and expanded. . . . Spherical trigonometry, the decimal system, the significance of the position of digits, the zero (*sifrum*, "empty," a *sifr* or cipher), geodesy, the pendulum and its record of time, pharmacy similar to its present development were established. A literature of poetry and prose was amassed—history, philosophy, biography, grammar, philology, trade, travel, and the arts. Perhaps the most individual contribution was the architecture, reaching perfection in 'Iráq, Spain, and North Africa. And more modest arts were mastered—agriculture, irrigation, work in leather, gold, iron, paper, textiles, and steel.

The Arabs' masterpiece is Islám; their weakest point the lack of stable government—the failure to sacrifice individualism and family pride for the sake of their leaders and to maintain the leadership of their race. With the Crusades, the Mongols, the Turks, and finally the military supremacy of the West, this civilization, after its luminous millennium, rapidly dwindled. Again the Arabs returned to the desert. . . .

Less than fifty years after the Prophet's death, 'Oqba ibn Nafi', having conquered North Africa from Egypt to Morocco, rode his horse into the Atlantic, proclaiming all of Ifrika and Móghrib for Islám. During this decade of conquest, he had

founded Kairawán (673 A.D.), and two years later the Mosque of Sidi 'Oqba, the second to be built in Africa, was there begun. His tomb near Biskra, in the little town of Sidi 'Oqba, bears the oldest Arabic inscription in Africa.

From North Africa, Táriq, the Berber freedman of Músá ibn Nusayr,* crossed by Gibraltar (Jabal Táriq, "Mountain of Táriq") in answer to the plea from discontented nobles of Spain. The new-crowned Roderic, last Visigoth king, was defeated. Ibn Nusayr followed with his Arab army, combined forces, conquered Spain in two years (712-14 A.D.), and then was recalled by Walíd, Umayyad caliph at Damascus. But the Muslim forces marched northward from Spain, under another Arab, Ibn 'Abdulláh, subdued a deserting Berber chief and his Teutonic allies, and did not stop until they had passed Poitiers. At the indecisive battle of Moussais-la-Bataille, their leader was killed, two thirds of the way from the Pyrenees to Paris. Seven years later, under Ibn Hájjaj, the Arab governor of Spain, they reached Lyons: four fifths of the way from the present Spanish border to Geneva and its Alpine lake.

Spain: a country like North Africa more than Europe, and peopled primevally by Iberians like Berbers, but then overrun by Celts. The Celtiberians responded better to similar experiences with Pheni-

* Músá ibn Nusayr: the Arab who finally conquered the Berbers.

cians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans . . . Spain: Rome's colony for six centuries, rising at last to prominence in the empire . . . Spain: lapsing for two centuries and a half under the rustic, illiterate Visigoths . . . This Spain was the richest, most resplendent, and most cultured state of Europe—though never equaling 'Iráq—within two centuries of Arab rule by the Umayyads, first of Damascus, then of Cordova. The Cordovan prince, 'Abdu 'l-Rahmán, was named "The Falcon of the Quraysh" by his bitterest enemy (also of the Quraysh), Mansúr, builder of Baghdád, and first of the 'Abbásid caliphs . . . This Falcon—who, a few months after entering Spain without an army, had mustered his friends, seized Seville and Cordova, and founded the independent Western Caliphate to be ruled for nearly three centuries by his family—was an Arab poet. And not only his successors but even Spanish peasants became proficient in Arabic verse—a part of every-day conversation.

Cordova, enriched by manufactured silks and commerce to Sudan, was a city whose splendor seemed visionary to all who came to learn; would seem visionary to-day. The construction of its mosque (the Mezquita, Spanish for *masjid*, now the second largest Christian Church) was begun seventy years after Arab occupation, following a plan similar to Kairawán's Mosque of Sidi 'Oqba, built a century before.

Despite later alterations and additions which "destroyed what was unique in the world"* the Mezquita still shows the architecture of many races welded anew into unity as Arab as Islám. There were nineteen bronze gateways . . . nineteen arched aisles, crossed by twenty-nine . . . twelve hundred pillars of porphyry, jasper, and polychrome marble . . . ten thousand lamps . . . a ceiling of gold-leaf . . . a mihrab mazed with mosaic, Qur'ánic verses and arabesque—silver and ebony, lapis lazuli, ivory, and sandal-wood. . . . Cordova was under Arab control for five centuries and a quarter: the Umayyad, Hakam II, had four hundred thousand volumes in his palace library alone. . . .

Toledo and Seville prospered—the first more soberly learned; the second blithe with the sunshine of art and music. . . . Seville, twice its present size, was known for its considerately treated Christians and Jews, the prominent cultural life of its women, equaled nowhere in Christian Europe, and for poetry. Its Arab prince, Mu'tamid, wrote poems which would have made any man a name in literature; poems compared to new-opening buds—like the almond-grafted roses of Seville. . . . Then Granada, longest under Arab sway, became the richest city of Spain; for two centuries under the

* "Destroyed," etc.: the words of Charles V of Spain (1500-58) to the cathedral authorities.

"Moors" (Arabized Berbers), but for nearly six hundred years, first and last, under the Umayyads—and the Nasrids, an Arab family long in Spain.

For a time (1158-1212) Berbers—a majority of Muslim invaders—almost obliterated the Arabs as a distinct race in Spain. But it is to the credit of the Berbers that as Moors they were at last able to rise with Arab civilization, as never before or since: a people who, unlike their Celtiberian kinsmen of Spain, had not understood the Roman Empire, learned to speak and read and write Arabic, and—to comprehend. They were able to rule two empires, in Spain and North Africa, longest in Morocco. Many were inclined to be reactionaries and fanatics, but some were truly enlightened men. Yúsuf ibn Táshifín saw the building of the first astronomical observatory in Europe, the Giralda at Seville, later improvised by the Christians as a belfry, yet, still one of the finest Moorish towers on the Continent. And the Moors built the city-palace of Alcázar—now virtually destroyed except the Torre del Oro (Tower of Gold), resplendent above the Guadalquiver.

Granada attained most lasting fame: before its eight centuries of Arab art were abandoned, it grew into a city of splendor second only to old Cordova. The Vase of Alhambra recalls the unmatched workmanship of minor arts; Malaga golden pottery was once without compare. Alhambra itself, a palace-

fortress built by a hundred years' labor and more, was well begun during the reign of the first Nasrid prince,—harmony giving no thought of material things, suspending cupolas and niches in the structure, lifting its carved, inscribed, and color-woven walls like lace fringed with frail columns and stalactites. . . . Mural paintings of tourneys and hunting scenes, the "ten kings," and paneled Arab chieftains, are forgotten. Yet Arab art had long "represented living things," though never "associating aught with God" in any place of worship, as the Qur'án forbids. Six hundred years before, life-paintings and plastic arts had begun with the Umayyads of Damascus; the Caliphs of Baghdád had voyaged on the Tigris and its flower-banked canals in gondolas like lion, snake, horse, and eagle; their palaces had curios of craftsmanship . . . a ruby-eyed elephant of gold . . . and at Basra had been a school of art whose mural paintings were renowned. . . .

At last the South of Spain, from Cadiz to Granada, was wrested from the Nasrid Arabs; the manuscripts treasured here, as in Cordova, were burned by Ximénez, the archbishop; Alhambra was defaced, despoiled, partially destroyed* and finally "restored" for what it was worth after three hundred and fifty years of injury. But the frail and structurally "im-

* As late as 1812 some of the towers were blown up by French invaders.

possible" beauty of Alhambra still lives; the ponderous palace of Charles V beside it, though three centuries younger, is in ruins.

In North Africa, Fez, Kairawán, Marrákash, like the cities of Spain, were centers of art and learning. Here were endowed universities and public libraries open to any student; Arabic translations of Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen, Discorides, Apollonius. . . . During the Dark Ages of Christian Europe, it was through Arabic rather than Latin that the wisdom of the Greeks was saved for the Renaissance. Thus the words of the Prophet, who taught that noble thoughts and scholarly pursuits are worthier praise of God than any ceremony of worship, were well remembered. And Arabic had taught the West: jungle tales from India, many romantic themes of nomad life, and that idealization of the cavalier—the desert prince who chose his steed from the finest in Arabia and who was reincarnated in medieval chivalry.

While Alhambra was only half complete, a different kind of palace was built at Cairo—a hospital. Free hospitals had been open in Islám since the eighth century, but this one was more carefully planned: open, sunny wards from four long intersecting corridors; a columned garden-court freshened by music and playing water. . . . A hospital

Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

TWO APOTHECARIES

Part of a page of an Arabic Dioscorides

in Egypt, where the Temples of Saturn had seen a false dawn of medical science five thousand years before.

Of the many notable Egyptians, Moors, Spaniards, Persians, Indians, and Greeks who wrote in Arabic, perhaps the one now best known to the West was the Persian, Avicenna, author of some hundred treatises, a physician, philosopher, poet, astronomer, encyclopedist. As a writer on medicine and surgery, he superseded Galen and Hippocrates. But an Arab, Avenzoar of Seville,—one of a family of four generations of physicians,—has been called the greatest of Muslim physicians, though by some his son was thought more brilliant. Avenzoar's writings, if not equaling the decorative style of Avicenna's, were of a more original nature: he performed operations, like tracheotomy—commonly used to-day, and still one of the most spectacular life-saving measures. He employed other methods of treatment essential to modern practice, as well as diagnosing rare conditions; and his teachings were a large part of the basic medical knowledge of sixteenth-century Europe.

Al-Kindí, an Arab of the Arabs,—one of the earliest translators and commentators of Aristotle,—was the greatest optician after Ptolemy. Another Arabian optician and astronomer, al-Hazen, understood such principles as atmospheric refraction, capillary attraction, and gravity as a force, and was the first to ex-

plain the physiology of vision (establishing Aristotle's theory and refuting Plato's notion of rays or antennæ from the eyes). Roger Bacon (who, with Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and Bonaventura, led the intellectual Europe of the thirteenth century), derived his education largely from faulty Latin translations of al-Kindí and al-Hazen. Bacon's most noted work, "Opus Majus," the encyclopedia of his century, resembled the writings of these philosophers, and Part V, of which Bacon was proudest, imitated both their style and subject-matter. Al-Hazen's Optics, in Latin and Italian, were known even to Kepler and Leonardo de Vinci.

At Tunis, six hundred years ago, was born Ibn Khaldún, foremost chronicler and historical philosopher of Islám and of the Orient. He became adviser at Alhambra, Cadi of Cairo, and ambassador to the Court of Castile. History he defined as an attempt "to make us acquainted with human society" and "all the manifold conditions which naturally occur in the development of civilization." Anticipating the conclusions of recent scholars, this Arab studied the forces which have made the races of mankind, particularly the effect of nomadic life on such civilizations as his own. And there were many other Arab scholars now remembered by the West chiefly for what they added to its scientific and technical knowledge. But the realm of purely literary Arabic has been ex-

plored by only a few European savants, though to the Arabs, as to any other race, their men of science are never quite so dear as those who have made of their language works of art. . . .

The North Africa of those days faced a Mediterranean from which Moorish ships sailed to all parts of the known world in search of commerce and knowledge, and discovered the Azores (the astronomers of Islám had already measured the globe by methods less daring but more learned, as when they calculated the length of a degree on the plains of 'Iráq). The architecture of Morocco rivaled that of Saracenic Spain; an art of making beautiful even the smallest of things—a little garden with a vista of the sea, a wide plain, or a distant, snow-topped mountain. The Algerian town of Tlemsán matched Alhambra in purity if not in splendor. And in all these palatial cities was the memory of the oasis: fountains and pools enlivened hidden courts; glassy tiles were tinted with the blue of the sky, the green of palm fronds, the yellow of desert sands; delicate arabesques were carved and molded, varied as the wind-strewn tracks of the caravan, smoothly intricate as a woman's veil. . . .

So North Africa remembers the Saracens. They took not only intellectual and urban splendor to the West, but such simple novelties as sugar and rice and cotton, such niceties as silk, saffron, almonds, ginger,

and myrrh. In oases like El Aghuat are fruit-trees which they also introduced to Europe—orange, lemon, fig, date, apricot, peach, pomegranate. . . . And out of their palm gardens came buds from the exquisite East—the fragrant jasmine, the double-petaled rose. . . .

The Sáhara holds the Arabs to her bosom as did, and still does, the desert of Arabia. And when the history of this unique race is scanned through the cycles of fifty centuries, they may be visualized as a phenix, rising again and again like the prophecy of an inspired Desert. South Arabs built cities equaling in beauty those of ancient Egypt; from the invisible fountain of life in central Arabia, rose Babylon, Assyria, Judea; the splendor of the South vanished like a mirage and was absorbed into the wilderness-waste of the peninsula. From three groups of Semites, derived partly from all these civilizations, the modern Arab race was forged in a sandy furnace, ebbing and flowing from glory to sudden ruin, and to the immortality of the desert. They rose with ephemeral magic, as under their Emperor of the East at Palmyra; again they lapsed to the nomadic life of Pre-Islamic days. Then, sweeping beyond the decadent states encroaching on Arabia, they gave to every race they encompassed, an ideal of faith, learn-

ing, individual and international life—Islám—welding with their language the scattered thoughts of ages into world civilization. And once more the phenix was drawn back into the core of the desert's whirlwind. . . .

The desert-given qualities of the Arabs—self-reliance, leadership, pride, above all, individualism—are as truly immortal as the phenix itself, and responsible alike for their rise and for their recession. Muhammad taught them ideals, greater than individual or clan, but nothing could erase the curse, and the blessing, of their individualism. They had been marked by the Desert, and to her have they always returned—to this Death-trap, Witch, and Mother of civilizations.

Now the Arab's desert surpasses the wilderness of their origin, and stretches from the Arabian Sea to the Atlantic. To-day, another Arab of the Arabs governs Mecca,—Ibn Sa'úd,—unifying his people with more skill and forbearance than the Ibn Sa'úd of two centuries ago, and perhaps with as much sincerity as the man of Mecca more than a thousand years before. On such simple and sincere foundations past glories have been builded; builded in the Arabs' desert, reservoir and resurrection of their strength from the beginning.

So the burnúsed scribe at El Aghuat conjures up the chronicle of his people. . . . No race has burned

so brightly, nearly flickered out, then flamed again, no race has endured so many and so sudden extremes,—and survived the centuries,—as have the Arabs.

CHAPTER TEN

A Will-o'-the-Wisp of the Sáhara

Before El Aghuat became a peaceful military outpost it was the center of innumerable rivalries and romances, quarrels and adventures. Like other oases, it was subject to a rapid series of ups and downs, but it was large enough to confer relative wealth upon its inhabitants and dependent desert tribes. And they, in turn, could afford a certain amount of luxury and display, color and dash, which make the hard life of the desert attractive.

Previously, the many invaders of the coast had little knowledge of this desert, and even the Romans scarcely ventured from its shores. A number of Berber refugees doubtless found safety in the oasis now called El Aghuat, but they are remembered only by a few place-names and vague legends. The town, with its caravan trade from the other side of the Sáhara, to Algiers, was an Arab development.

A river travels four or five leagues under the sands before flowing through El Aghuat, then disappears again for a time before finally emptying into Shat

Melghir. On this common phenomenon of Saharan rivers the Numidian king Juba II of Mauretania based his theory of the origin of the Nile (tracing it, as expressed in modern terms, from western Morocco to Algeria, then to the Niger and the Blue Nile, and finally through Egypt to the Mediterranean). But he did not reckon wisely with the desert: although he unintentionally made his Nile eight thousand miles long and had it dive breathless beneath the two thousand miles of "sterile region," he had then circumscribed only three sides of the Sáhara.

Later, in the same desert, Arabs built towns like El Aghuat, started transcontinental trade and pilgrimages, and lived out their adventuresome careers. Tribes settled about an oasis, were friends or rivals as the case might be, endlessly struggling for whatever prosperity they could enjoy. To protect such a group of villages from the nomads, a certain holy man, Sa'íd Háji Aïssa, counseled the building of fortifications around the entire settlement, and El Aghuat, "The Houses Surrounded by Gardens," was founded. Aïssa is still reverently remembered; a kubba on one of the little hills of the towns, is named for him.

For three centuries before the coming of the French (1830), the Turks ruled the coast; the fertile Mitija became a mosquito-swarming morass, the cities swarmed with pirates. But El Aghuat retained

independence despite the quarrels of two tribes, the Wálid Hallaf on the east side of the median ridge, the Wálid Serghin on the west. Most of the oasis settlements near by, the present "suburbs," were forced to pay tribute to the Turks. Finally, just before the French occupation of Algiers, Ahmad ibn Sálim, the chief of the Wálid Hallaf, gained complete control of El Aghuat—after the murder of his rival. The town showed architectural pretensions: Dar Sfah, "House of Rock," was built, dominating the ridge between the tribes; and Italian laborers were imported for the construction of a large Moorish bath.

But Ibn Sálim was not trusted. When the amír 'Abdu 'l-Qádir was trying to organize a unified defense against the French (1837-38), a chief of the Wálid Serghin at El Aghuat was appointed Khalífa of the Sáhara. The amír also planned a military base at Aïn-Mahdí (about forty miles west), but a traitorous marabout, Tejini, refused him admission and forced him to storm the town. Of the four other "suburbs," two were strongly loyal and two were less reliable. Strangely enough, the oasis of Aïn-Mahdí—which had paid tribute to Morocco and had later suffered most from Turkish inroads—was the only one now openly opposed to united resistance, although expecting to repel the latest invaders alone.

While the amír was doing his best to consolidate

other parts of Algeria, Ibn Sálim, by joining forces with Tejini, seized El Aghuat, drove out and finally killed the amír's khalífa, and set himself up as chief. Having thus disrupted Arab organization in the Sáhara, he sought personal safety by asking aid of the French. The French forces, busy in Constantine, Oran, and Morocco, probably had not considered, at this time (1844), advancing as far south as El Aghuat; but a column was sent down to make the most of the opportunity. Three years later the amír —after his failure to spur the Kabyles to concerted action, and his betrayal in other parts of the country as at El Aghuat—finally surrendered.

But Ibn Sálim and the French officers did not make themselves popular at El Aghuat, and it was not long before the people asked Muhammad ibn 'Abdulláh, the independent Sultán of Wargla, to rescue them. The town was readily occupied, but the French agent and a second Ibn Sálim, who had succeeded the first, escaped to Jelfa. With a firm grip on northern Algeria, the French now marched against El Aghuat (1852), set up a battery on one of the sanctuaries near the town,—the tomb of Sa'íd Hájí Aïssa,—and demolished the walls and turrets and castles, "The Houses Surrounded by Gardens," which he had founded.

The wounded sultán escaped to Wargla, two hundred miles southeast across the desert; the surviving

inhabitants straggled after him, or set out for other oases, to make new homes. The French were left with a ruined city, cluttered with unburied dead; frightened dogs fled to a rocky hill (Rocher des Chiens) in the desert near by; even the birds abandoned the oasis. But then huge flocks of crows and numberless vultures came to help make the place habitable.

At first it was planned to deport (to Jabal Amur) any of the survivors who might have remained, and then entirely destroy the oasis so that there would be no future El Aghuat to give trouble. But when a few of the former residents finally wandered back and started to build up their homes again, the French decided it would be more profitable to make a military stronghold: forts and official residences were constructed and the people encouraged to rebuild their homes under French supervision.

The Arabs of El Aghuat were in the trough of the great wave of Arab civilization they followed. A number of gifted men were connected with the town, but their efforts were isolated; indeed, the fortune of the race seems to fluctuate as the stars of its individuals either rise independently or reach the ascendant together. Perhaps the most surprising character was the Sultán of Wargla, who defended the

town; but he would be the last person to mention first in a story. . . .

Sa'íd Muhammad ibn Sanúsí, the Arab founder of the Sanúsiyya fraternity, was born in Algeria at the end of the eighteenth century, devoted the first part of his life to study, and then spent a number of years in the northern Sáhara, teaching at El Aghuat and other oases near by. Shortly before the French took Algiers he went to Cairo and then to Mecca. Here he became one of the two leaders of the Qádirís, an important Súfí brotherhood. After making a few valuable friends in Mecca, he traveled among the Wahhábí Beduin of the peninsula, followers of the teachings of 'Abd al-Wahháb, an Arab of Najd who, about a hundred years before, had rejuvenated the old Khárijite doctrines (the original Reformation of Islám).

Among these tribes, Sanúsí was again impressed, as he had been in the Sáhara, with the spiritual strength and simplicity of the desert: he renounced Súfí mysticism, to adopt original Islám, like the Wahhábís and their predecessors the Khárijites. But he retained the Súfí system of organization in his plan of joining all desert peoples into one great Islamic fraternity. After a beginning in Arabia, he returned to North Africa: within fifteen years the Sanúsiyya had spread across the Sáhara from his headquarters in the Libyan Desert, the oasis of Jagh-

bub. Here the Grand Sanúsí died, virtually a caliph; and his tomb has become a shrine of the organization (now centered at Kufra) which he founded, and which has been extended from Morocco to India by his successors and followers. The Ibn Sa'úd who first championed the Wahhábís, and the present Ibn Sa'úd, a descendant, have had the same ideals, primarily for Arabia, which the Sanúsís, down to the present Idris es-Sanúsí, have had for the desert and for Islám as a whole. And Ibn Sa'úd has adopted a similar organization, with *ikhwán*, or "brothers."

The interrelation of Islamic forces is unusual: one of the kubbas of El Aghuat commemorates the spot where 'Abdu 'l-Qádir al-Jílí stopped to pray. Seven centuries before the North-African amír of similar name, al-Jílí founded the Qádirís whom Sanúsí later headed for a time and who are still a very numerous order of dervishes. And to the tomb of al-Jílí, in Baghdád, water still flows from the Tigris, by the only aqueduct now remaining of the numberless waterways and canals which were built from both Tigris and Euphrates to Baghdád when it was the crown of the Muslim world.

And El Aghuat played a part, of course, in the military career of the 'Abdu 'l-Qádir of North Africa —like Sanúsí, a descendant of the Prophet. As a youth, the future amír made the Hajj with his father, visiting Baghdád and the tomb of the other

'Abdu 'l-Qádir. Returning to Algeria, he proved to be the greatest military leader North Africa has ever produced, and—more than this—has ever since been remembered as an exemplar of Arab breeding and chivalry.

And then, Muhammad ibn 'Abdulláh—not the most renowned, but certainly the most individualistic of those associated with El Aghuat . . . Here he was wounded, while turrets tumbled about him, and from here he managed to gallop away, finally to cross two hundred miles of desert to Wargla and safety. Without the distinction of noble blood, he made a unique name for himself in the history of the country: escapades like that at El Aghuat were common for the wily 'Abdulláh, a will-o'-the-wisp of the Sáhara, without rival.

'Abdulláh played a rare game, losing more often than winning, yet losing with more luster than the victor won. In 1840, he was an obscure student of theology residing among the Wálid Sa'íd Shaikh. A few months later, his appearance at the head of a resplendent array of Arab cavaliers—whom he had cajoled into showing him off—was so irresistible that the French proclaimed him "Sultán" on the spot. Then, since they had no sultanates on hand at the time, the governor-general made him Khalífa of Tlemsán, which the French had just captured. Meanwhile, the Wálid Sa'íd Shaikh had deserted

'Abdu 'l-Qádir and gone over to the French, and 'Abdulláh—whatever his original plan had been—had to change his tactics. Having risen within a year from obscurity to kingly rank, he now gave the French to understand that he was not at all pleased with his sudden demotion to Khalífa. Although he had actually contributed to the French armies not more than sixty horsemen,—willing to follow his daring schemes, but probably taking little active part on either side,—he made the most of his slighted dignity, and finally became such a nuisance and a perplexity that the French had a hard time trying to decide just how to handle him. They at last suggested, with all due respect, that since the annual Pilgrimage to Mecca was then in progress, he most certainly owed it to his position to join the pilgrims and leave the French comfortably abandoned to their disbelief. Apparently, this was just what 'Abdulláh had hoped for.

He went to Mecca—perhaps still khalífa to the French, but once more sultán of his own free will. He soon struck up a friendship with no other than the Grand Sanúsí. Then (after 'Abdu l'-Qádir had surrendered) Sanúsí, who was just starting his fraternity in Tripoli, tried to help the sporadic efforts to carry on the cause of the amír—and 'Abdulláh was appointed one of Sanúsí's lieutenants. After a rather inglorious journey from Tripoli, through Ghadames

and Tuggurt, he finally reached Wargla, where, in 1850, he succeeded the ruler and became sultán indeed. He immediately occupied Tuggurt as well, and then was called to El Aghuat. Unable to hold the town against French cannon, he at least avoided any possible attempt of the French to award further titles, by vanishing into the desert.

While the French were wondering what to do with the remains of El Aghuat, 'Abdulláh, in his sultanate of Wargla-Tuggurt, was quietly convalescing from his wounds: he subdued a few neighboring tribes not otherwise amenable to his defiant leadership, made an expedition to the M'zab (a hundred miles or more southeast of El Aghuat), which he won peacefully to his cause, and continued to domineer one proud chieftain after another, until the wound was entirely mended. The French governor-general was apparently a thorough sportsman: before starting a real man-hunt after this Saharan will-o'-the-wisp, he allowed 'Abdulláh not only to get back on his feet but grow tired of the saddle. The pursuit spread out along a line of two hundred and fifty miles. But the quarry was well supported by the best horsemen of the Sáhara,—El Arbaä of El Aghuat,—and the French did not accomplish much until they had persuaded the chief of the Wálid Sa'íd Shaikh to take a try at the former teacher of theology, "dead or alive."

IN AN OASIS

Men like these rallied under the Will-o'-the-wisp of the Sáhara

The chief was able to seize Wargla after a brave battle, but the sultán did not happen to be in at the time, having gone on an unexpected visit to Tunisia. The Bey of Tunis, fearing for his own safety, commanded . . . aye, entreated . . . this Damoclean personage to leave his domain forthwith. So the Will-o'-the-Wisp chose Tuggurt for a good seven-months vacation in the familiar desert. Then the French half demolished and ransacked the town, only to find that the object of all this strife had again vanished—to Tripoli, four or five hundred miles across the Sáhara.

But three or four years later (1858), he suddenly reappeared at Insalah, an even greater distance from where he had been heard of last. Here he amused himself by marshaling Beduin tribes, and even won over the least known and most feared people of the desert, the Tawarik. Three years more, and he was again sultán at Wargla, rapidly subjugating the surrounding regions. This much-trampled town was once more seized and ransacked, but all in vain. 'Abdulláh was by then well on his way back to the M'zab and beyond. . . . At last—twenty years after first being proclaimed by the French sultán of an indefinite realm in the Sáhara—he was trapped by Sa'íd Bu Bakr, chief of the Wálid Sa'íd Shaikh, and son, no less, of the chief who had been unable to catch 'Abdulláh when Wargla had first

been stormed to make him captive. Captured at last —but only after he had carried on the cause of the amír for fourteen years after the latter's surrender.

'Abdulláh was exiled to France (1861), old and failing in health, yet healed of many wounds. The officers of Napoleon III, like his Governor-General of Algeria, were good sportsmen, and treated the prisoner royally—providing him with a good Arabic library and the attendance of a faithful servant. The old Arab warrior was perhaps more of a sultán than originally, under Louis Philippe's representative in Algeria. Indeed, while 'Abdulláh had made history for North Africa, France had been a kingdom, a republic, and was now, again, an empire. After a time, he was allowed to go back quietly to Algeria, where, at Bône (a seacoast town), he also quietly married the daughter of his host, a representative at the *bureau arabe*. . . .

Then, during the Revolt of 1871, 'Abdulláh vanished finally. Meanwhile the French were diverted by the carryings-on of another "obscure student of theology," at Aïn Mahdí, the "suburb" west of El Aghuat. Before developing into a second 'Abdulláh, he was deported to Bordeaux. Here he made the best of it, marrying a young French girl. After the war he took his bride back to Aïn-Mahdí, and built for her a fairy castle at Kurdan, a small oasis near by.

The Will-o'-the-Wisp had been forgotten. To be

sure, he too had married a young wife; but he was so old and feeble. . . . Yes, he must have passed away quietly during the revolt. . . . True enough, he had passed away, and quietly, but he had just taken a little trip of a thousand miles or so from Bône to the northwest corner of Morocco, about forty miles from the Atlantic coast. Here he finally won his old game of catch-if-catch-you-can, and for six years before his death had a happy sojourn at the Sanúsiyya zawiya of Jabal Lakhdar. If el-Mahdí es-Sanúsí, the younger son and successor of the Grand Master, ever stopped by, the aged patriot doubtless told him of the good old days in Mecca and Tripoli with Sanúsí himself, and then how he had swept from one battle-field to another, like the winds across the desert. He may have admitted that the French first gave him the idea of being sultán, but it is not likely that he ever confessed, even on his death-bed, that he had himself invented the name by which he is known in history, and that "the obscure student of theology" was never Muhammad ibn 'Abdulláh, after all!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The People of El Aghuat

To the north of El Aghuat are ranged straight-rimmed hills of rock and sand,—browns and yellows fused in the sunshine,—and farther still, the "Lazuli Hills" of Jabal al-Azraq. And to the south, the Sáhara spreads out beneath an appalling immensity of sky, toward the immeasurably remote horizon. El Aghuat, with a population of not more than six or seven thousand, is an "urban" center for five smaller oasis towns (at varying distances of six to forty miles), and for the less settled desert tribes—notably El Arbaä—within an area of about four thousand square miles. In addition, it is the governmental center for the Territory of Ghardaïa, about a third or fourth of the Algerian Sáhara. El Aghuat also is an important station in the line of communication extending directly south from Algiers: a railway to Jelfa, a military highway to El Aghuat, a road to the city of Ghardaïa, a caravan trail to El Golea, Insalah, then branching southeast to Timbuktu—the whole journey two thousand miles and more.

The outgrown walls around the older section of the town—a sort of cabalistic circlet against enemies of a former day—now seem only a pleasing part of the town's design. A half-dozen kubbas ornament the hills and *dayas* about the oasis, and there are seven or eight mosques: one, converted for a time into a Christian church, is now a sort of public bank; another has become a shop and warehouse. But most of the mosques still well serve their original purpose, and are all the more faithfully attended for their age and memory-wealth of other days. The commanding site of Dar-Sfah (the palace-fortress long since destroyed) is now occupied by a new mosque, with broad steps leading up to the terraced entrance; its sunny walls are bright with blending tints of blues, pinks, and delicate greens. The canal, or seguia, flows within the walls of the town; the wide, stony bed of the river is frequently dry, sometimes flooded; and there are three dams, the latest built since French occupation. Along the banks of the river are flowers, tall palms by the thousand, more thickly foliaged oaks and tamarisks, villas, gardens, and cultivated fields, an ever widening prosperity expanded by irrigation. And the gates of the old town, now never closed, open to these newer environs, to a tree-bordered road from the north, and to the time-worn trails of the Sáhara.

In the afternoon and evening, caravans file in

from the desert. The processions halt close to the wall along the market street; and amidst guttural commands and orderly bustle the gurgling camels are made to kneel, crowding together, swinging their heads, complaining and threatening to bite. The beasts are quickly unburdened, fed and hobbled—one fore leg bent at the knee and securely tied. An Arab may scold and berate his camel or donkey (never a horse), yet he is always ready to sacrifice himself for them; and the animals seem to understand their master's temperament and fundamental good-will.

When flaming color mantles the west, the first call of the *muedhdhin* pierces with clear notes the noises of the camp, quieting the confusion and echoing thrice from the fervent sky. The men leave off their preparations for the night; each makes ablutions, perhaps lays a rug, and in solemn accord they answer the incantation of evening prayer. . . .

Sometimes there are women with the caravan. Circumspectly veiled now that they have reached the town, they go to fetch water with shaggy goatskin *qirbis*. Soon a fire is burning; and, like a pale spiraling effigy of the flames, steam rises from a simmering pot. After the meal, the nomads may talk for a while . . . Their dogs circle about, then curl up contentedly, as though knowing there is no need to keep watch here. The embers silver and grow dim

. . . and safely shepherded in the fold of night, the wanderers sleep, a single spread of darkness resting softly over all.

Everywhere throughout Algeria, the language, customs, characteristics, and dress of the Arabs are surprisingly unchanged—an evidence of how true to type these people were before their exodus from Arabia, and of how uniquely unmingled with other races was the Arab stock of the peninsula. When they first settled in Algeria, some of course took Berber wives, but this was not the general custom. And in jealously guarding the marriages of their own women, the Arabs have largely preserved their racial purity—notably in desert towns like El Aghuat. Their apparently endless genealogies often go back more than a dozen centuries, to the time of Muhammad, and even before.

It has been a common European observation that fanaticism and other untoward traits are found among Berbers and negroes or those with a large admixture of such racial elements, but, as a rule, not among Arabs. In this connection it may be well to consider the terms "Saracen" and "Moor." "Saracen" —perhaps originally an Arabic word—was used by the Greeks and Romans to designate any of the Beduin with whom they came in contact. Later it came to mean any Arab; and finally it was applied to

any of the Muslim opponents of the Crusaders, especially in Spain or other parts of Europe, and especially an Arab. "Moor" has no racial significance whatever. It was first used by Greeks and Romans to designate an ancient Berber or "Mauretanian." The Arabs of Arabia use *Móghrebi*, or "Westerner," for any native of North Africa, particularly an Arab, and more particularly a man of Móghrib, Morocco, the land of the Occident. In modern English, "Moor" tends to follow the Arabic in meaning, if not in derivation—with an implication of either Arab or Berber blood or a mixture of the two. "Moor" is also used for any of the former Muslim invaders and settlers of Spain. The common people of Muslim Spain came to be a mixture of Berbers, Jews, Syrian-Arabs, and native Andalusians; and when these "Moors" finally returned to Morocco,—mingling to some extent with the Arabs of the towns and fertile plains,—they were called "Andalusians" by the purer-blooded Berbers of the mountains. On the other hand, to the European, there is an implication of negro blood in the word "Moor," as in "blacka-moor," probably because of the Muslim negroes formerly in Spain. But the original meaning of "Moor" or "Mauretanian" (Μαῦρος, a dark or black man) may have come from the fact that the ancient Berbers seemed dark to the Nordics of Hellene; or, again, by a confusion with

African negroes, although the Berbers so named were fairer than the modern Greek or Moor. Finally, "Moor" has come to mean any Arabic-speaking native of North Africa, as contrasted to the isolated Berbers of the mountains; or a town-dwelling Arab, as contrasted to the purer-blooded Beduin of the desert.

The Arabs, however, have remained a distinct race in Algeria, and have also kept their political structure, and their nobility—the descendants of the Prophet, the descendants of the original military leaders, and the men who have shown great religious merit, and their descendants. Even under the modern French government, members of this aristocracy are recognized and appointed for the direct governing of the people: as of old, each tribe and sub-tribe has its shaikh, each district its caïd, and each of the few main divisions of southern Algeria is ruled by a khalífa. The more important of these governors have in addition liegemen in their private service whose families continue in this hereditary office for generations.

The shaikh (venerable elder, chief) is one of the most characteristic institutions of the Arabs, and the basic unit of their government. His power continues so long as he fulfils his office creditably, but no longer. Similarly, when the title becomes hereditary, as it usually does, a new shaikh of a different family

is chosen if the successor of the former chief is not considered worthy by the tribe. The shaikh has the entire responsibility of the tribe: he is the judge, the executive, the military commander, and the treasurer. Because of this last function, he must be a man of some personal wealth, as well as influential, brave, steadfast in his principles and resolve, wise, and diplomatic. It is his duty to be hospitable to strangers, travelers, and visitors, whether or not their business is concerned with the affairs of the tribe. He must also care for the needy and sick among his own people, give them what simple luxuries, gifts, and entertainments he can afford, supply their wants, compensate for their losses and misfortunes, and even provide for the widows of the tribe, taking them into his own home if unable to care for them otherwise. The shaikh, then, is not only the ruler of the tribe, but its acknowledged representative in every branch of government, and, in fact, the representative of its ideals of virtue and strength.

This system is fundamental among all desert Arabs, although modified to some extent in different localities, as in the Sáhara. It is one of the oldest, simplest, and most effective methods of political organization which has ever been evolved anywhere, though it functions properly only in the desert and among Arabs. Its chief disadvantage is the independence, rivalry, and even open warfare among the

tribes. The Arabs of Arabia have never been conquered by an outside force, and have rarely had any reason to band themselves together against a common enemy. On the other hand, they have always been faced with a constant struggle for survival among themselves; and since the tribe had more chance for survival than the individual, the Arabs became divided into many of these small independent tribal nations in an isolated world of their own.

As far as the tribe itself is concerned, its system of government has many advantages: it combines absolute monarchy and absolute democracy, with an element of representation and communism. Respect, devotion, and strict obedience are accorded to the shaikh because he is the acknowledged leader; but he attends the mosque and carries on his personal affairs like any other tribal citizen, and may be replaced by any one who proves more capable. And although his authority is absolute and he may impose any decree, even the death sentence, on any member of the tribe, the tribe as a whole also has absolute authority over the shaikh, even the power of inflicting the death sentence on him. He is therefore vitally concerned with executing his duties as well as possible. The element of communism in the tribal organization is in the tenure of land, owned collectively by the tribe except in cities and towns where it is owned by families. As for representation, the shaikh himself acts

as a very complete representative of his people; in addition, he may institute any form of governmental machinery to assist him—deputy governors, military officers, advisory councils, judges, committees, police, and whatever else may be needed.

The shaikh has, of course, control of "foreign relations" and taxes. Unless some sort of confederacy or central government has been established, the neighboring tribes are treated as distinct nations. Taxes are levied on the personal possessions of individuals of the tribe: these personal possessions include everything not owned by the tribal commune, especially whatever property is included in the inviolable tent-walled domicile of the tribesman. This property is strictly respected and theft severely punished. But if a prosperous man becomes oppressive to his debtors, or does not enter into the spirit of the tribe and share his plenty with the poor, then the shaikh will make decisions against him, and if need be, deprive him of his wealth entirely—to enrich the public treasury.

In such matters, as in all other activities and decisions, the shaikh has full power. There is no need for cumbersome legislation or for legal precedent other than general custom and common sense, no need for written laws other than those of the Qur'án. There is no appeal from the primal and final decision of the shaikh; and no appeal is necessary, except

the majority-vote veto of death for the shaikh. In this eventuality the majority rules, but the minority also is provided for: an individual is not bound to a single tribe, but if discontented, may join any other tribe whose ideas are more in accord with his own. The result is speedy justice, yet flexible, for every one, including the judge. The numberless laws, lawyers, and legal procedures of more ponderous governments have never been able to eliminate the personal factor and so attain mechanically infallible justice. In the tribal system the personal factor not only is recognized, but even predominates, to the advantage of every one concerned. The shaikh cannot safely indulge his own particular prejudices, but he very often inclines toward the prejudices of the majority: prejudices against extortion, against advantages taken by the rich over the poor, and against leniency toward distinguished members of the tribe. Thus the offender may be extravagantly punished or entirely excused; the plaintiff may be accorded damages and public apologies far in excess of the injury he has received, or may be dismissed without any redress whatever. No rule of thumb is followed: the shaikh relies upon his common sense, his knowledge of the people, particularly his knowledge of the individuals involved, and his foresight as to the far-reaching secondary results of each decision.

Obviously, in order that such a system should succeed, the shaikh must use his powers without stint, and without hesitation or theoretical considerations. And, to inspire the necessary devotion and loyalty, the shaikh must be even more of a "born leader" than any of his fellow-tribesmen; in fact, he must act just as each tribesman hopes he could act himself in the same position. Individual, family, tribe . . . so far the Arabs stand inseparably together. Each tribe has its pride of descent, its own particular customs, traditions, and reputations; and for all this the shaikh is the single, elective representative and exemplar.

There are many other Arab titles, variously applied to men of rank or of noble blood. As the Arabs came to live in towns and cities, the judiciary function of the shaikh became specialized—except, usually, in respect to criminal cases—in the cadi (*al-qádí*, from *qada*, "to decide"; like the Spanish *alcalde*, "judge"), who is the local magistrate. The caïd (*al-qáid*, from *qáda*, "to lead"; like the Spanish *alcaide*) is the governor of a city, district, or fortress. "Sa'íd," spelled half a dozen ways in English, in general means "lord" or "prince," and is applied particularly to descendants of the Prophet, but is used more especially for persons of high position as well as noble birth. "Amír" ("commander"), also applied occasionally to descendants of the Prophet,

denotes primarily one who holds an office or position, such as the ruler—often independent—of a province. "Amír" was used, too, to designate a government official or commander, like the English "lord"—as "First Lord of the Admiralty." And the word "admiral" is a contraction of *amír al-bahr*, "lord, or commander, of the sea." Up to the present day many of the rulers in provinces and other high officials are known by the title of "khalífa," the same word as "caliph," but used in a less exalted sense. "Khalífa" ("successor") was the title modestly assumed originally by Abú Bakr and 'Umar, the first two caliphs, to signify that they were merely followers of the Prophet. But soon, of course, "caliph" came to be the highest title in Islám.

In the "Southern Military Territories" of Algeria (the Algerian Sáhara as far as it has any centralized government at all) the tribal organization is fundamental. The people are ruled by the heads of families, the shaikhs of tribes, the caïds of towns and cities; and, finally, each territory is controlled by a khalífa. He is held responsible to the central office at Algiers. For some reason the French have partly adopted the old Turkish nomenclature, and use "bachagha" instead of "khalífa," although the former is not an Arabic word.

In the Territory of Ghardaïa, of which El Aghuat is the administrative center, the khalífa—or, as he

is called officially, the bachagha—is Dailis ibn Jellúl, who in recent years has acted in this capacity for his aged father. It is customary for Arab shaikhs and governors to retire in favor of their provisional successors. Therefore the new chief has had the advantage of experienced advice, and the opportunity of proving his own ability before assuming full responsibility. Formerly, Dailis was chief of El Arbaä, one of the most powerful tribes of the Algerian Sáhara, who have long dominated the eastern desert as the Wálid Sa'íd Shaikh have dominated the desert to the west. Since a younger member of the family Jellúl is chief of El Arbaä, and the head of the family is bachagha (there is no higher title among the Arabs and Berbers of Algeria), the Jellúls occupy a most important position, and their influence extends as far south as the French Sudan.

The bachagha, then, is one of the keystones upon which a peaceful French control in the Sáhara depends. The lack of trouble or friction is largely due to the skill of such Arab governors, who, like the shaikh for his single tribe, must live up to the ideals and expectations of many tribes, towns, and cities, and must also be in close sympathy with the many lesser chiefs under their command. The task is not made easier by the fact that the people in these territories are not homogeneous: in the Territory of Ghardaïa, for instance, the M'zabites—inhabiting

THE BACHAGHA DAILIS IBN JELLUL
Khalífa of a Saharan Territory of Algeria

the city of Ghardaïa and its six sister cities of the M'zab—are of a different race, language, and somewhat different religious views than the Arab bachagha. So it is that the bachagha is the executive by whom three civilizations—Arab, French, and M'zabite—are made to harmonize in this quarter of the Algerian Sáhara. The Arab governors are not figureheads: without them such peaceful military strongholds as El Aghuat would be unpleasantly busy frontier posts.

In speaking of the people of El Aghuat, the works of Eugène Fromentin should be mentioned—a novelist, a writer on general topics, particularly his travels in North Africa, and the first and greatest painter of the life of that country. In addition to their artistic value, his paintings reveal a remarkably detailed knowledge of the subject. And in his writings about Algeria he also showed that rare faculty of perceiving and understanding the subject each time anew. Fromentin described (in "Un Été dans le Sahara") an excursion with a French lieutenant to one of the "suburbs" of El Aghuat, seven months after that town had been demolished. On the way they met El Arbaä in full caravan: The bagpipes and drums and bright-colored standards of the tribe . . . The long column of Arab warriors, women, and children; goats and sheep and dogs . . . The great lean camels, nervous and glossy and almost

white, decked with black satin and with silver anklets . . . The greyhounds; the beautiful horses draped with gold-embroidered silks and brocades, white horses, golden chestnut, light and dark gray, bright reddish sorrel, pale fawn, black horses like the iridescent breast of a pigeon . . . Saddles of crimson velvet broidered with gold, or violet with silver; stirrups and harnesses damaskined and worked with precious metal . . . Camel-litters with silken hangings and cushions of damask richly woven with metal threads, citron and black, scarlet and olive, orange and violet, cerise and emerald . . . Rugs, crimson, purple, and garnet. . . .

Fromentin called the Arabs the most *spirituel* and polished people in the world. On this occasion he was especially impressed by the chief and his son, both more simply attired, in baránis of unbleached wool, than the slaves and servants; particularly impressed by the young prince on his black charger. While the cavalcade passed, Fromentin was made a little self-conscious only when he turned to his companion, the lieutenant, to whom he then said, "Comment trouvez-vous que nous représentions la France?" ("What do you think of our representation of France?")

In El Aghuat is an establishment of Les Missionaires de Nôtre Dame d'Afrique. Les Sœurs Blanches

do a very worthy work among the women and girls of the community, and also help the little girls develop their art of embroidery and weaving; the articles made are sold by the mission. Many of the children are tiny creatures, four or five years old, with their hair quaintly braided and wound with strips of cloth to make it grow long, and sometimes done in a paste to turn it red, a shade generally admired by Arabs. Even the very youngest are extremely expert, scarcely needing to glance at the pattern pinned to the warp of the loom, as they quickly and smoothly weave the design.

In Algeria the mission sets an admirable example: its teachings are simple and utilitarian; its workers do not proselytize; indeed, Christianity and Islám coexist in this country with unusual harmony and mutual respect. And the attitude of Les Missionaires toward the Muslims is reciprocated, with accurate regard for the words of the Prophet, who instructed his followers to revere the institutions of other religions, even to help in their preservation. Aliens were welcomed to the great cities of Islám's zenith, where leaders in the Western world (one later became pope) were schooled by Muslim masters. And one of the most famous Jewish scholars and philosophers, Rabbi Moses ibn Maimon, born in Cordova, continued his brilliant work at Fez, and finally became court physician to Saladin.

But it is strange, and amusing, to see the Roman Church supervise these children of the East in the weaving of rugs! Long before Rome existed even as a city, little nomad girls, very much like those at El Aghuat, were busy at their looms. These Beduin, so closely attached to the desert, seem always to have woven a pretty reflection of it into their rugs and carpets. And it may be because of this similitude to the desert that the carpet means so much to the Arabs. It is to them as the fireside is to the West, the essential symbol of domestic life; indeed, of any human life. It is not only the nomad's hearth, but his house, his chair, his bed, his table—the atomic fundamental of his home. And the prayer-rug is his mosque. The carpet has its place not only in the House of Alláh, but in the palace, the tent, and even the market-place. The run and play of children, the beauty of women, the wisdom of old men—all these are themes woven into the intimate harmony of the carpet. Over it the Arab never marches roughshod, but treads lightly and softly, barefooted, or with the silent slippered feet of the East, as though further to strengthen its likeness to the yielding sands of the desert. And wherever he wanders, wherever he tarries, he spreads his carpet, a simile of his greater abode, the desert.

As elsewhere in the Sáhara, the people themselves

of El Aghuat are simple in their tastes and unassuming in their industries. The desert tribes about the town rely chiefly on their fine horses, camels, and sheep for their prosperity. During the summer they may migrate with their flocks in search of pasturage, as far north as the Tell (the "hill country," from *tall*, "hill"), the region north of the Saharan plateaus. The coast itself is called the Sahel, from the Arabic word for "shore." Their business dealings are guileless, yet shrewd. Among themselves they delight in prolonging a sale by elaborate phrases more picturesque than meaningful, but a contract is inviolable. Their sense of humor is keen, and they are fond of telling anecdotes to family or friends; with a wide grin, the raconteur will sit back and enjoy the laugh, often at his own expense. And friendship, once made, is never forgotten.

But outside the intimate circle, the Arab shows a prudence which keeps human relationships always in their proper place: he has little patience with familiarity or any other offense to his dignity. Yet when approached in a more naturally amicable way, he is pleasant and receptive, with an uncompromising respect for any man of learning or piety, regardless of nationality and creed. He is usually glad to exchange views and philosophize, but is not easily drawn into argument, and to strangers is not given to speaking overmuch of himself. His thoughts are

concrete and definite, the manner of his thinking analytical; yet he has a depth of spiritual and poetic insight into material things. Custom and tradition he knows well and treats accordingly: they are ornaments and graces not to be ignored; still, they should not impede freedom of thought, word and action, should the occasion arise.

To deliberate questioning, an Arab's answers are frequently Delphic; there are few contradictions of whatever you may infer—perhaps because he is naturally amiable and polite, or simply because he is not personally concerned with what you think. Should there be anything in your remarks to indicate a private and possibly unfounded belief, he will rarely contradict you. You are certainly entitled to whatever notion you fancy most; he takes no issue with you on that score. The next moment, however, you may be confounded by a totally incompatible opinion of his own!

To-day, as in the time of Muhammad, it is still customary to send children born in a city (especially boys) away to an oasis, where in the care of a relative, nurse, or guardian, they may acquire the health and inspiration of desert life. And among the desert tribes themselves, a boy is a horseman at five, a warrior and scout at twelve, and while still in his teens a man with wife and family cares. The little girls are taught singing and dancing, and are usually given

lessons on one of the native musical instruments. Among the Beduin, they cook, weave, and sew, helping to make clothes for the family and often doing a part of the heavy seaming of tents. The older girls are even more carefully schooled in their responsibilities and duties. In contrast to the Berbers, Arab maidens are strictly guarded against lax morals and vulgar knowledge; questionable deportment is severely punished. And the Arabs respect the virtue they demand: a woman can always expect courtesy and protection; even in time of war abuse of any woman is not tolerated.

Theoretically, Algeria has a representative government as a part of France. But there are salient differences: the governor-general; the strict militarism in the Sáhara and to a lesser extent in all coastal communities where the majority are Muslims; the denial of citizenship to this majority throughout Algeria; and the Arab-Islamic legal and administrative system, still the actual government of most of the people.

The Muslims of Algeria are not allowed to vote; or to bear firearms except by special permission from the colonial government; but under the capable rule of their own leaders the Arabs do not indulge in disturbances. In this respect they make good subjects; yet, from the point of view of the colonizer, they may lack coöperative enthusiasm. They seem to wait

for some inevitable future. This appearance of waiting, this apparent faith in the phenix of their race, has caused the Arabs to be regarded as inscrutable, unknowable, aloof. . . . Yet their reserve is rather a dignified defense against the frequently rude inquisitiveness of foreigners whose patronage naturally engenders resentment. Perhaps the Arabs are indifferent to the progress of an alien civilization imposed upon them. But they have some reason to be proud. And although the Beduin of to-day may not accurately know the past,—cloaked with the glamour of legend, remembered as South Arabia was remembered in the poetry of Pre-Islamic nomads,—yet the message of this past is vividly graven on their unlettered hearts.

Tall, gaunt, enduring, these men, with their keen senses and keener intuition, still spurn the labor of the fields and the confining turmoil of modern citied civilization. Tried by ordeal, yet untouched, ever certain of their strength, they are leaders by the very force of their personality. And if any one thing can be blamed for their decline, it is the redundance of this indomitable spirit. They surrender little to their conquerors; ruled as deftly and lightly as possible, commanded only by their own people, yet they seem famished for want of their naturally unbounded freedom.

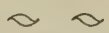
The tranquillity of the Arab—his trust in God,

A PURE TYPE OF ALGERIAN ARAB

his appreciation of his lot, however meager, his sense of intimate integration with the universe—is often described as fatalism. But his is no colorless acceptance of destiny. Islám teaches him rather to stabilize his love of adventure by good deeds, and to sublimate his courage and loyalty into a serene mental poise that admits of no surprise at anything in this world. *El maktúb, maktúb:* What is written, is written. . . . Yet this Arab fatalism gave impetus to the Berbers. . . . During the days of Saracenic ascendancy in Spain, when the Castilian king, Alphonso VI, seriously threatened the invaders, the Arabs secured the aid of Yúsuf ibn Táshifín, Berber leader of the Almoravides. On the eve of battle, Alphonso at the head of a victorious army sent to his antagonist a lengthy, pompous, and very menacing letter. This was promptly returned without answer except these words written on the back: "What will happen, thou shalt see." . . . The Spanish army was destroyed.

Singularly influenced by dominant personalities as has been the history of the East, no individual has ever more strongly molded his people's destiny than did Muhammad. And individualism marks the Arab of to-day; it is accentuated not only by his natural environment, the desert, but also by the teachings and very structure of his faith. Islám rests a definite responsibility on the individual, who must solve his

own problems and not include in his prayers any of the minor perplexities of life. And this individualism does not lead to selfishness, but rather to a more understanding respect for the affairs of others.



With all the torrential quality of Arab history at full tide, with all the Arab's mobility and swift achievement, he shows surprising quiet and composure, nor does he recognize the need for haste. Time is the vehicle of the Arab's meditation. In North Africa he is often entrenched at the café maure with friends, sipping pungent black coffee, playing inconsequential games of chess or dominoes. And again, wrapped in his burnús,—a fitting complement of his thought and mode of life,—he sits quietly in some solitude, lost for uncounted hours in oblivious abstraction. Even should his cloak be threadbare, he carries himself with a distinction that his most richly attired and proudly titled countryman cannot excel; and whatever its import, his glance is always forceful and direct.

This unalterable dignity is an inborn and almost independent quality, a natural prestige of personality; it commands recognition though its possessor be unconscious of the effect. It is not the pride of acquired aristocracy, but an hereditary talent of the race. The Arab's robe sweeps and furls and molds

about his form as the sands ripplingly embrace the desert's orb. And as the desert veils and yet most vividly suggests all manner of geologic history, the burnús seems magically to infold the processional pomp and poverty, the unique and brilliant heritage of its wearer.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Islám

Call to Morning Prayer

Alláhu akbar! Alláhu akbar!
Alláhu akbar! Alláhu akbar!
Ashhadu an lá iláha illa'lláh!
Ashhadu an lá iláha illa'lláh!
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasúlu-lláh!
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasúlu-lláh!
Hayya 'ala 's-saláti!
Hayya 'ala 's-saláti!
Hayya 'ala 'l-faláh!
Hayya 'ala 'l-faláh!
As-salátu *kh*airun mina 'n-naumi! *
As-salátu *kh*airun mina 'n-naumi!
Alláhu akbar! Alláhu akbar!
Lá iláha illa 'lláh!

God is most great.
I testify that there is no god but God.
I testify that Muhammad is the Apostle of God.
Come ye to prayer.
Come ye to salvation.
Prayer is better than sleep.*
God is most great.
There is no god but God.

* This phrase is interposed only in the call for morning prayers. At other times it is omitted.

With the first stirring of the Muslim world, at the dawn of a new day, comes the muedhdhin's call to prayer—a distant singing voice, cadent and sweet, with a few repetitive notes of compelling simplicity. It is an appeal, a command to wake; not to the commonplace drudgery and meaningless routine of visible life, but to open the mind wide, to give the soul free sway in an aspiration toward God. Thus the Muslim, hearing the voice from the "shining tower," † is lifted from the nadir of sleep to a full zenith of spiritual exaltation. He is refreshed and invigorated, and gains inspiration to guide him gladly and wholesomely throughout the day.

From dawn to sundown, from birth to grave, he sees in his life and in all the lives about him, in the world and in the universe, a single, primal, and final God, infusing each thought, each thing—and yet somehow centered into one great crowning Ideal, unimaginably remote, all-powerful. Toward this all-wise Magnificence, embracing all beauty, all mystery,

† Minaret: *manárat,* "lamp," "turret"; from *nár,* "to shine."

flows the soul of every believer, and "he who wishes for a reward in this world—with God is the reward of this world, and of the next" (Qur'án, IV, 132).

But for reward the Muslim does not pray, neither does he pray for any personal favor, for any miracle or deliverance. No, he does not pray: he worships, he sings praises. Working his own salvation, the Muslim, after his best struggle, looks upon the outcome, good or bad, with dignity and composure. "It is the Will of Alláh."

And "Muhammad is His Apostle," he does not bridge the chasm between the Merciful and the Muslim; but the chasm is bridged by the Truth Who inspired Muhammad. The life, the personality, and the work of the Prophet are dwarfed by the Glory Whom he taught his people to worship. This man preached to pagan, half-civilized nomads, and to the aristocrats of his native town of Mecca. These people in the obscurity of the Arabian peninsula, ancient matrix of the Semite Race, were brave, chivalrous, and generous to an extreme; yet above their primitive code of ethics, their ideal was the honor of the tribe, right or wrong. But the Lord said: "O ye who believe! be ye steadfast in justice, witnessing before God though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kindred, be it rich or poor, for God is nearer akin than either" (Qur'án, IV, 133).

Thus unity came to old Arabia—that was as corrupted by blood feuds, selfish prides, and false idols as is the world to-day.

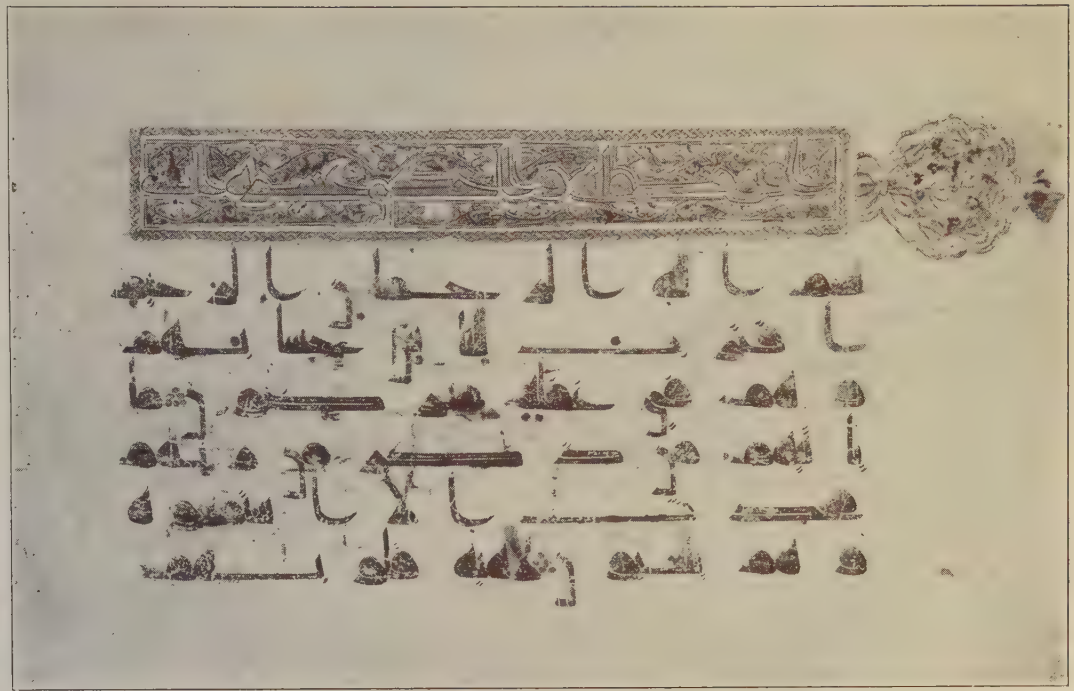
Only by a rigid outlining of their daily lives could these Arabs have been taught the single greatness of God, and the oneness of Islám. Not only were they made to feel God in every act and thought, in every moment, but they were instructed with severe detail both in their individual and their national conduct, and in the especial worship of their Holy Guardian, by prayer and pilgrimage. And this precision was not empty formula: it was a necessity for the subtle web, the welded firmness of Islám. Even then, throughout the days of the first caliphs, the Beduin rebelled at the tithes and prayers of the new religion, and at its denial of their old delights and customs.

But in its fundamental principle—"There is no god but God"—Islám was not a new religion. Ibráhím, Moses, and Christ had been Teachers of this same God; and Muhammad, as the last Prophet, led his people from their idolatry to a renewed realization of the One Alláh, and created the structure of Islám. And even Bakkah (ancient Mecca), which became the center of this great unity, had its beginning, however legendary, in a miracle of the Eternal Giver:

Ismá'íl, the son of Ibráhím and the mythological

progenitor of the Arabs, and his mother, Hájar, were alone on the Arabian Desert, and without food or water. To save them, the angel of the Lord, Ghibra'íl, caused "murmuring waters," the well of Zamzam, to appear. Birds flying toward this new spring—like the pilgrims of later years—were followed by the inhabitants of the neighboring desert; and thus Mecca and the Arab nation were founded.

Later, when Ibráhím came to visit Hájar, he and his son Ismá'íl built the Ka'ba, a temple for the worship of Alláh, using as a ladder the stone which has come to be known as the Maqámu Ibráhím, Abraham's Stone. The primitive simplicity of the Ka'ba indicates its antiquity; and, indeed, there is no reliable account of its origin, even in legend. In all, it is supposed to have been built and rebuilt ten times. First created by God before the creation of the world, this model was copied by Adam, Seth, Ibráhím, and the 'Amálíq descendants of Sám ibn Núh (Shem, son of Noah). At the time of Christ it was reconstructed by the Banú Jugash, and again by the great-great-grandfather of Muhammad. This last was destroyed by fire, but rebuilt during the life of the Prophet. Nearly a century later, again destroyed by fire, it was again reconstructed by Hajjáj ibn Yúsuf. And finally, after partial destruction by flood, the present Ka'ba, with a remnant of the old building of the sixty-fourth year of the Hijra, was re-



Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

PAGE OF A QUR'ÁN

Parchment (Egypt) Kufic Script, ninth to tenth century

built—a thousand years after the Prophet's death.

But before the birth of Islám, the Ka'ba had become a sort of pagan pantheon, containing icons of Ibráhím and Ismá'íl, a representation of the Virgin and Child, two gold-and-silver gazelles, a red agate figure of Hubal, the principal idol, and three hundred and sixty lesser idols. The genius of the Prophet, whose uncle and guardian was the keeper of this ancient temple,—the very root of Arab thought,—may be partially gaged by his ability to convert his countrymen again to the belief in One God, especially when making his first addresses in the shadow of this stronghold of the old, complicated idolatry. And it is obvious why the Qur'án so emphatically prohibits image worship of any sort: "Verily, God pardons not associating aught with Him, but He pardons anything short of that to whomsoever He pleases; but he who associates aught with God, he hath devised a mighty sin" (Qur'án, IV, 51), and "O ye who believe! verily . . . statues . . . are only an abomination of Satan's work" (V, 93).

However, once his teachings were established, and idolatry in any form banished forever, Muhammad wisely chose the Ka'ba, so long the keystone of Arab custom and history, as the spiritual center of Islám. Mecca has become the sacred city, the holy metropolis—untouched by unbelievers except a very few,

from the time of the Caliph 'Umar. Muhammad reëstablished in a new light the ancient custom of the Hajj, Pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, and now, everywhere throughout the world of Islám, the háji is respected as a holy man. Not only the rich, but also huge flocks of the poor, expending their last resource, the last struggle of their failing lives, make this long journey—a symbol of the transient earthly life toward the Great Goal of God.

In a corner of the Ka'ba is the Black Stone, and the legend of this sacred relic goes back to the founding of Mecca: While walking through the *Háram* which later became the site of the Holy City, Ibráhím was touched on the shoulder by the angel Ghibra'íl; and from the body of the Friend of God, as the Muslims call the patriarch, at once appeared a host of unborn spirits, the souls of his future descendants. As these bodiless beings separated into two armies (those on his right representing the Muslims and those on the left the descendants who would not become Muslims) God appeared and asked them if they accepted Him as the one, true Alláh. Their answer in unison, "*Labbayka 'lláhumma, labbayka*" ("We obey, O God, we obey"), has been made the basis of a pilgrims' prayer, and is also the foundation of the belief that all men are born with Muslim souls, and may only later be led away from Islám. During the construction of the

Ka'ba, Ghibra'íl again appeared to Ibráhím and gave to him a stone bearing a secret inscription of God's commandments, and instructed him to build it into the corner of the temple, from which the pilgrims begin their ceremonies. In the tenth century this stone was carried off by a tribe at war with the Meccans, and was not recovered for twenty-two years. About a century later, an iconoclast struck the stone thrice with an iron weapon, and succeeded in cracking it before he was seized by the pilgrims. Mythology states that the Black Stone (actually a meteorite) was pure white when originally given to Adam, and then taken from the Garden of Eden, but that its smoothly polished fragments, now carefully cemented together and held by a silver band, have been blackened by the sins of the countless pilgrims who have kissed it.

Each detail of the shrines at Mecca—the Mother of Cities—is sacred. If the Hajj takes place during the rainy season, the pilgrims crowd eagerly for a few drops of holy water from the golden waterspout, or M'zab, which drains the roof of the Ka'ba. And despite the many privations that mar the beauty of the pilgrimage, this massive "Cube" is the greatest physical manifestation of the mystery and power of Islám. Locked in absolute seclusion by the surrounding gallery of the mosque, and joined to it by narrow paths, this magnet of the souls of men waits

like the spirit of the millennium; waits for the message of its unity, not necessarily of its creed, to bring thoughtful pilgrims from a still greater world. Guarded by eunuchs, the single, silver-studded door is constantly lighted by candles and incense-burners, and the entire building is shrouded with a black silk covering bordered with verses from the Qur'án and inscribed with the name of its giver, the head of the Muslim world. And after many, many leagues of arduous, perhaps fatal journeyings, the pilgrims are at last rewarded by a vision of this awesome ghostly Bride of Islám.

Yet despite its apparent richness in ritual, Islám, as a religion, is fundamentally and originally very simple. Its mythology seems but another version of the Old Testament; it holds to three essential beliefs, One God, the Prophet, and the Judgment Day; it has four important rites, prayer, pilgrimage, fasting, and abstention from certain foods; and its ethics, which include and extend beyond the usual realm of religion, are of particular interest in their relation to charity, slaves, women, and war.

Muhammad, the Envoy of God, although not himself divine, was inspired with the Qur'án, God's Message to His people through Ghibra'íl, the angel of the Lord. As the successor and vicar of Muhammad, the caliph is the temporal and spiritual leader

of Islám; and throughout the Realm of the Faith, the Qur'án is taught and memorized in the same language, the very words of the Prophet. On the Judgment Day, each soul shall be judged equally and individually, and shall be rewarded or punished with heaven or hell: "and we will bring forth for him on the resurrection day a book offered to him wide open. 'Read thy book, thou art accountant enough against thyself to-day!' He who accepts guidance, accepts it only for his own soul: and he who errs, errs only against it" (Qur'án, xvii, 14-16).

The Muslim hopes to make, at least once during his lifetime, the holy Pilgrimage to Mecca, to join in the ceremonies around the Ka'ba, and to take proper observance of the other shrines. Between sunrise and sunset all through the sacred month of Ramadán, he fasts; and at all times, in eating, he avoids "that which dies of itself, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that which is devoted to other than God" (Qur'án, v, 4). And the greatest unifying force of Islám is prayer—prayer following reverent ablutions. One formal ceremony of worship throughout the Muslim world at five appointed hours of each day, that spans continents and seas, that turns the Faithful in mind and body toward the lodestar of their faith, the Ka'ba—this is the unison of Islám.

In the Arab's instinctive generosity, Islám found a basis for one of its cardinal principles of ethics—

charity. Muhammad extended his conception of this virtue to include even the details of kindly and courteous behavior. "Every good act is charity." Usury is forbidden; and a certain percentage of a Muslim's possessions and profits must be contributed to help those in greater need. "O ye who believe! expend alms of what we have bestowed upon you, before the day comes in which is no barter, and no friendship, and no intercession" (Qur'án, II, 255). At the close of the Muslim Lent, the month of Ramadán, the head of each family must in addition give alms according to his means, for himself, for every member of his family, and for any guests or wayfarers in his household. This money is apportioned among the poor, given to travelers in need, and used for similar charitable purposes, including the ransoming of slaves.

And how has a faith which insists so firmly on the equality of men—irrespective of race, wealth, or, to some degree, even creed—combated the ancient institution of slavery? Islám was the first religion to establish rules, if not for the immediate release of slaves, at least for their gradual emancipation. Muhammad frequently told his followers to free their slaves; for some sins he fixed the penalty of liberating the offender's slaves, and ordained that every facility should be given them to buy their freedom, by labor, if they so desired. By these and

many other regulations, the acquiring of slaves was made more difficult, their liberation encouraged, and their condition greatly improved: the Qur'án explicitly states that they must be clothed, fed, and cared for as any member of the family. Nor may man, wife, and child be separated, nor one kinsman from another. And there are numerous examples of slaves rising to great heights in the Muslim world: Muhammad made Bilál, a negro Abyssinian slave, the first muedhdhin of the Faith; and a number of the Prophet's leaders and generals were freedmen. But of the many unusual careers of Muslim slaves, the most striking is that of Qutb ud-Dín, who founded a dynasty of the Muslim Empire in India, and established Delhi as the capital. His name is inscribed in the Manár, the "shining pillar" of victory, still rising high above the ancient city.

The first years of the Prophet's mission were filled with hardship and adversity, and he might never have entered the pages of history had it not been for the faith and reassurance of his first convert, Khadíja, the wife of his youth. Perhaps it was because of his devotion to this woman, a lasting influence in his life, that Muhammad so emphasized, in his teachings, a respect for women: "Treat your wives with kindness and love."

At this time the position of women in Arabia was twofold. The caravan trade of Mecca brought to

urban life not only wealth and luxury from Byzantium, Persia, and India, but also a somewhat degraded attitude toward women. Here as elsewhere they were looked down upon as very inferior to men, virtually owned by their fathers, husbands, or masters, and had almost no privileges as members of the community. But in contrast, the women of the desert enjoyed unique independence and figured prominently in the life of the tribe. They were the inspiration of the poems and knight-errantry original with the nomads of Arabia, and one, Zenobia, the widow of the Arab "Augustus" of Palmyra, had risen to the power of an empress. However, the Beduin, despite their chivalry and insistence on the honor of their women, occasionally practised female infanticide, a custom existing also in adjoining countries.

This crime Muhammad absolutely forbade, and entreated his people to regard their children as a sacred trust from God, placed in their care to be loved and esteemed. And in purification of Meccan morals, he prohibited conditional and temporary marriages, concubinage, and all other irregular relationships between men and women, and insisted that, as a protection against the hardened life of the city, women should be veiled when they appeared in public. Despite the numerical preponderance of women over men, in Arabia at that time, polygyny

was limited to the simultaneous possession of four wives. And by stipulating that the husband must in *all* respects treat his wives with exact equality, the Prophet enacted a somewhat flexible code which would really prohibit polygyny if the impossible stipulation were taken literally. The laws and customs relative to marriage and divorce were greatly improved, and marriage itself was established as a civil and legal act. Divorce was forbidden except for reasons that could not be otherwise adjusted, and women were given the right of divorce on such grounds. They were made legally equal to men, were given their share in the heritage from their parents, and could not be forced into marriage against their will. Before marriage the prospective husband was required to make a settlement on his intended bride in proportion to her social status; and he had no right to interfere with her heritage, her endowment, or her earnings, or any legal action she might take in connection with her property.

In this way the best features of woman's station, in both the cities and the desert of Pre-Islamic Arabia, were preserved for the future of Islám. And throughout the most brilliant periods of its history, women were not only *ummehat-ur-rijal* (mothers of men), but also joined in the intellectual freedom and achievement of Muslim culture. The remarkable beauty of desert verse and chivalry lived to

foster the romantic age in Europe; and to the present day, among the true believers, Muslim women find in the happy privacy of their homes the same theme of gallantry and protection.

As prince as well as prophet, Muhammad recognized the necessity of war for the preservation of Islám. In the face of persecution, even attempted murder, he did not permit himself to become a martyr, however effective such a rôle might have been. With a few followers, he made frank resistance to attack, never with any idea of revenge, but with the hope of bringing the Message of God to his fellowmen and making a livelihood for the religion in which he sincerely and devoutly believed. But Islám is not only a religion: it is a nation, a civilization, a summation of the entire life of its peoples. The Muslims were fighting for their individual lives, for their faith, and for their fatherland. Islám is an ideal: for this ideal they fought their revolution and evolved their empire. So it is that the Muslim must possess all the generally admired virtues, and in time of need must also willingly give his life in defense of his faith.

Bloodshed was never an ideal of Islám: its strongest appeal has ever been the satisfying completeness of its religion. The new races embraced in the temporal sway of the Saracens' great domain, accepted its spiritual teachings because of their intrinsic worth.

And beyond its territorial bounds, the Faith has reached out a great invisible empire over China, India and its seventy million Muslims, even to central Africa: an empire builded only in the souls of its citizens. "There is no compulsion in religion: the right way has been distinguished from the wrong, and whoso disbelieves in Tághút [idols and demons] and believes in God, he has got hold of the firm handle in which there is no breaking off" (Qur'án, II, 258). And "whoso kills a soul, unless it be for another soul or for violence in the land, it is as though he had killed men altogether; but whoso saves one, it is as though he had saved men altogether" (v, 35). Alláh is sterner and more awesome than the Christian conception of the Deity, yet in the "Names of God" the Muslim describes Him as a Clement Light, a Patient Guide, a Loving Peace; and "thy Lord is forgiving, endowed with mercy" (XVIII, 57).

From the word "Islám" much may be learned of the religion: the root *aslama* (to surrender) also forms the participial noun "Muslim" (one who surrenders), signifying, more fully, surrender to the guidance of the Divine Will, not with a sense of fatalism, but with the inspired and wilful endeavor of the individual toward purity of thought and conduct. So, with such complete spiritual adjustment, the Muslim finds in Islám its simplest and most per-

fect significance—tranquillity. "O ye who believe! enter ye into peace, one and all" (Qur'án, II, 204). "Islám" is unique in rendering the fundamental principle of a great faith, rather than commemorating its leader.

Peace is the aspiration of Islám—the equality and brotherhood not only of Muslims, but of all mankind. A minor contradiction of such equality may seem to be suggested by the fact that social prestige among the Arabs is rigidly set by birth. But because of the firmness of this distinction, there is no feeling of unrest; there has come about a happy communion and mingling of all classes of this people, not only in the strict equality of religion, but also in the informal fraternity of every-day life. Wealth or poverty raises no barrier between those mentally compatible, and it is not unusual to see a caïd walking in brotherly attitude with a man in the meanest attire.

In this hope for world-wide brotherhood, Islám even includes other religions. The Muslim—who considers that before Muhammad, Christ was the greatest prophet—believes that salvation comes equally to all who strive to live up to the moral precepts in any well-developed creed. "For each one of you have we made a law and a pathway: and had God pleased He would have made you one nation, but He will surely try you concerning that [religion] which He has brought you. Be ye there-

fore emulous in good deeds; to God is your return altogether, and He will let you know concerning that wherein ye do dispute" (Qur'án, v 53).

In every Muslim country, one is at once impressed with the constant prominence which the Faith holds in the life of the people; nor is this a mere show of righteousness, but reaches deep into every-day thought and every-day affairs. The Muslim Sabbath, Friday,—when special services are held in the mosques,—does not offer a sharp contrast to the other days of the week; yet causes the people to gather in the cities, towns, and villages, where, except for the especially appointed hours, they may meet in friendly intercourse.

"Those who believe and do aright, we will make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, and they shall dwell therein forever and aye, for them therein are pure wives, and we will make them enter into a shady shade" (Qur'án, IV, 60), and "Enter into paradise, you and your women." The Qur'án's description of paradise is the picture of poetry. And to the Arab (often suffering in the desert from want and insufficiency), verdure, shade, running water, and maiden wives have much more spiritual appeal than would a Hebrew heaven of unalloyed gold. The Qur'án, obviously, was manifested in the ancient style of allegory: it spoke to primitive people in terms they could vividly understand. And it made

real to those nomads the future reward for good deeds on earth and the immortality of the soul—ideas with which they were unfamiliar and for which there were, in the Arabic of that time, no synonyms nor lofty phrases.

The greatness of Islám, its signal strength, lies in its unity. Each tribe, warrior, poet, man of sanctity or science lives in the history of one empire, one church, one common glory of Islám. Fundamentally religious, it is more than a creed. In the purity of its conception, it is a complete civilization, a theocratic democracy, a legal system for the individuals and nations that are blended into its composition. To its followers it has given a virile and convincing reason and object for their lives. It is practical. It gives a well-defined and easily understood formula of life to its people—a formula of which they were in great need. Spiritual and lofty, it centers in God all the unattainably ideal: not insisting on an inimitable model of human perfection, it makes it possible and useful to be a good Muslim. And, with all the sovereignty and centralization of Islám, the Muslim bows only to God. Whether alone upon the desert or among his fellows in a mosque, each believer stands before the Creator revealed in his true light, and no one, however exemplary or meritorious, may elevate any other than himself nearer to God, in Whose sight all mankind are equal. There is no caste or hierarchy

of priesthood acting as intermediaries: "Nor have ye, beside God, a patron or a helper" (Qur'án, xxix, 21). There have been many factions, differences of opinion on dogma or historical detail, but the whole has ever been greater than these parts. Islám is one of the most luminous ideals the world has ever tried to realize.

With the flower of spiritual unfolding, came a fuller expression of the Arabs' sense of beauty. The Qur'án, first standard of their written literature, as the Book is known in original Arabic to all Muslims, presents its thoughts freshly, vitally, in stirring, cadent verse. The sinners are "the pebbles of Hell," the works of the unbelievers are "like the mirage in a plain" or "like darkness on a deep sea." This same expressiveness is seen in Arab architecture. And the buoyant simplicity of even a desert mosque, lacking rich arabesque, is all the more radiant in the clear vitality of the oasis. Above the main body of such a mosque, a low dome lifts to the sky its smooth expressionless face, white as a full moon. Basking in the splendor of the heavens and calmly receptive of their blessing and revelation, it is rounded and full, as with beauty and spiritual knowledge. And in contrast to this smooth serenity, as of a face with fast-shut, introverted eyes, the minarets rise with swift

grace, like slim white arms reaching up to Alláh in vivid apostrophe.

There is to a desert mosque a simple ecstasy not so clearly felt in more massive, more palpably handsome temples. It typifies a spirit, an idealization of the rude structure of brick and earth and palm-leaves, where were said the earliest orisons of Islám. From the shadowed alcove of the mihráb, the *imám* reads the Qur'án, and leads the faithful in prayer; as in rhythmic unison they rise and kneel before this altar, they are facing toward the shrine of Mecca. The mosque itself is an expression of the elemental beauty surrounding it: just as the Gothic cathedral suggests the tall majesty and cool, shadowy arches of the forest, so do the wide dome and open floor of the *masjid* * reflect the free hemisphere of sky above the flatness of the desert.

On the bright slim pinnacles of minarets, the declining sun glances a last gleaming arrow, and then . . . With the muedhdhins' intonation of evening prayer, the voices of the people far below rise in a gentle tide of adoration, while the town, its oasis and bare hills, and the encircling desert, stretch away in concentric symmetry — natural, unspectacular, as though at rest beneath the comforting surveillance of the mosque, and abiding in the Tranquillity of Islám.

* *Masjid:* mosque; from *sajada,* to adore.

THAT INCONGRUOUS TENT AT EL AGHUAT

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Bachagha Dailis ibn Jellúl

ALTHOUGH it is the custom for a traveler to pay his respects, upon arrival, to the chief of an Arab community, I had not thought of doing so in a town such as El Aghuat, where visitors from abroad have ceased to be unusual and are no longer really the guests of the people. Consequently, I was surprised when, upon returning from a walk one day, I was told that the Bachagha Dailis ibn Jellúl was waiting to receive me in the large tent in the palm garden beside the hotel. The tent, unmistakably of European manufacture, is an attractive, incongruous affair—a sort of playground imitation of an Arab tent, used as neutral ground for official entertainments.

The bachagha came from the far end of the dim canopied hall, to greet me at the threshold. Over his white gandurah he wore a brown burnús—as simple and inconspicuous garments as any worn by his people. But his hlafa, bound with many turns of a yellow *'agál*, was of the very finest white linen, and his high red boots were embroidered with gold and sil-

ver threads. His hlafa, worn far back on his head, gave his face a certain roundness and joviality despite the reddish beard trimmed to a point. And as he extended his hand in welcome, a pleasant smile creased tiny wrinkles at the corners of his keen, appraising brown eyes. Although not tall, he is a man of imposing and distinguished presence.

There was an effortless quiet inside the tent, a relaxation even from the unhurried life of the oasis and from that sense of sky and trees, desert and distance, which one feels in the open. Many-colored jerbis, festooning walls and roof, gave pleasing tones to the diffused sunlight filtering through. The floor was covered with several layers of soft rugs, and low cushioned divans encircled the room; on one of these we sat down, beside a brass tray with coffee and cigarettes. After a formal exchange of compliments, the bachagha began conversing pleasantly while preparing the coffee, and I was soon put at ease by his kindness and tact.

Dailis ibn Jellúl is noted for his graciousness and good humor: born under the new order of affairs in Algeria, he has assumed without dissemblance the rôle of representing his country in foreign lands and of entertaining, on occasion, official guests for the French. His feelings for his own people, and for the desert lands of their origin and adoption, are exceeded only by his devotion to his father, a man

more of the old régime, austere and unbending. Dailis, having assumed according to custom his father's responsibilities, may well be proud of so dignified and sagacious an adviser.

Men of the bachagha's rank require a personality at least outwardly ambidextrous to keep their people's admiration and respect and at the same time carry on the important work of coördination with colonial officials. Nearly all the Algerian nobility wear decorations "for their services to France," and appear at the governor-general's annual ball in Algiers; even Tawarik chiefs from the most remote Sáhara have been entertained on war-ships and treated to the noise of naval guns. Chiefs and governors journey to Paris, dress in European clothes, and mingle with the notables *comme il faut,* or in Arab attire give the Parisians a more effective impression of the Government's influence across the Mediterranean. But however much these excursions may be enjoyed, they are not without advantage in estimating the ways and means of the West.

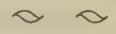
We talked in a general way of the country, and the bachagha recounted, with uncommon courtesy and not without a sparkle of humor, some of his impressions of foreigners: Americans, in particular, travel quickly and with little encumbrance, "almost like an Arab!" . . . And he spoke of his experiences while traveling in Europe and elsewhere: there

is really no great difference between East and West, "like two sons of the same family, one much older than the other, who have lived far apart, but who now, by seeing each other frequently, are coming to appreciate their kinship." . . .

Yet I was a bit puzzled, as nothing he said indicated why he had wished to receive me, unless it was the remark, "You seem to discover charms in this friendly oasis without the need for formal scrutiny, as if you had often been among us before." The conversation soon turned to Arabia, where I had spent some time as a child, and he spoke more freely then—of the ageless legends of the peninsula, which had been his delight since a boy; of Najd and North Africa; of his caravan journeyings; of desert lore concerning horses and camels; and of hunting trips near his caravansary. . . .

It was easily perceived that hunting is his favorite sport: his eyes kindled as, with eloquent enthusiasm and quick gestures, he described the falcon chase. . . . "The falcon seems to embody all the swiftness and unforeseen certainty of the desert's moody spirit." . . . Indeed, world affairs and anecdotes of travel were forgotten, in that incongruous tent at El Aghuat, as he told of the unfettered life of the desert. . . . He asked if I liked hunting, and then invited me to join in a falcon chase. Of course I accepted; my plans to leave for the M'zab the next day

could easily be postponed. But he assured me that this would not be necessary: he could accompany me on my way as far as his caravansary at Tilghrempt, about half-way, where I might break the journey by being his guest for luncheon. And on my return trip, he would meet me there and have preparations made for the hunt. This plan was ideal, and we agreed to start early on the morrow.



At six o'clock the next morning I was sitting in the automobile with Yusuf, ready to leave. The manager of the hotel, the femme de chambre, and her husband the porter stood with professional impassivity, waiting to bid us au revoir. Fifteen minutes . . . half an hour . . . an hour . . . still no bachagha! Yusuf grew uneasy: we had a difficult ride ahead of us; he asked me again and again if I were sure that Dailis ibn Jellúl had *really* said he would go with us, and remarked naïvely, "He has very fine automobiles of his own, you know." I was beginning to wonder, myself: perhaps I had misunderstood. . . .

At last, far down the street, there arose a great hubbub; all along the way came the sibilant whisper: "Dailis! Dailis!" Men, women, and children, with a great flurry of robes and baránis, were running out of all the side streets, leaving the houses and shops deserted, and clamorously converging around the

bachagha, to pay him homage. Unassumingly attired, very much as on the day before, he had dismounted, and was advancing slowly toward us down the length of the market street, attended only by a shiny jet-black slave in whitest turban and burnús. Finally Dailis reached us and took his place in the tonneau. His dignity was great, his apologies profuse, as he explained his delay: the night before he had ridden some distance from El Aghuat to a residence he has for his young wife; in the morning it was discovered that his horse had run away. As it was a favorite mount, he did not wish to leave until it had been retrieved, and so had lost considerable time.

Now, all smiling and content, we made our adieux, and Yusuf started the engine. But just as the automobile moved forward, a belated and over-enthusiastic Arab, eager to imprint the last kiss on the bachagha's robes, opened the door of the tonneau against which some of my luggage was piled, and out tumbled a bottle of mineral water! With a cry of dismay, the poor man desperately lunged for it, fumbled, and the elusive bottle slipped from his grasp, to shatter on the ground with a loud *plop!* I laughed, and heard a chuckle from Yusuf as he stopped the automobile; every one turned to the scene of tragedy with varying degrees of mirth, except the bachagha, who, still a little vexed by the unpropitious beginning of his day, saw nothing humorous in the incident. Be-

neath lowered brows, his eyes glinted ominously as he berated the unlucky one with none too gentle reprovals and sentenced him with every distressing penalty which could be thought of on the spur of the moment. Under this verbal fusillade the distracted offender backed away with a rapid series of salaams —a doleful pantomime of penitence.

Then, with a diminuendo of imprecations upon the stupidity of his subject, the bachagha recovered his composure and smilingly waved Yusuf to drive ahead before another mishap occurred; every moment more and more people were appearing. Yusuf steered through the crowded market street, squawking the horn and scattering goats, donkeys, and peaceful pedestrians, for the bachagha was eager to be away. As we passed through Bab-el-Ghrárbi, he asked the bachagha if he would like the top of the tonneau down, but Dailis emphatically shook his head and, as if reminded, drew back into the corner of the seat, lest sight of him call forth another demonstration! Later, however, when we were several miles from El Aghuat, the top was adjusted so that he could take a shot at any game we might sight on the way to his caravansary.

For some time we rode along in silence, each keeping a sharp lookout. By and by I turned to ask a question, and was dumfounded to find a man remarkably changed in appearance riding with us!

Indeed, for one amazed moment I thought he was not the bachagha at all. His attire had been completely altered: gone was the all-enveloping brown burnús; instead he now wore a handsome dark-blue burnús over a white one; and across his lap his long modern rifle rested easily in his sun-browned hands, ready for instant use. He had drawn a fold of his hlafa across the lower part of his face, and above this improvised mask, concealing all but the eyes, his guileless glance met mine, ingenuously ignoring my all too evident astonishment. There were at least two subsequent changes, but I could never imagine where all the clothes came from.

All about us were uneven, meagerly vegetated plains, *la Région de la Daya*: sand, stones, gullies, tufted halfa-grass; sometimes a dry river-bed or a lone botm-tree. But in the rim of the morning sky a mirage hung pulsing and unreal, now a blur of nebulous light, now deepening in a pool of clear blue and green, cool and lustrous and enticing. . . . After a while we saw a bustard near the road, some distance ahead—a fine bird somewhat larger than a wild turkey, with pale-gray plumage and long pink legs. It did not rise until we were very near, and then flew heavily just a little way. Knowing that the bachagha is an excellent marksman and frequently hunts from his own automobile, I

expected every moment that he would try a shot at it, but instead he signaled Yusuf to drive cross-country after the bird. However, Yusuf was reluctant: the ground was very rough, and his automobile was not fitted for such wayward reconnoitering. And so the bachagha got out to pursue the bustard on foot.

Running swiftly for a few yards, he then made use of what little cover was available, and stalked the game as near as he could. It is the custom in the desert even to lose the quarry rather than waste a cartridge, so mindful is the Arab of emergencies he may encounter; but the bachagha evidently desired to hit the bird in the head or neck and not mutilate its body with a rifle-shot. The bustard, however, did not seem in the mood for such refined tactics: every time the hunter would cautiously approach a few steps, the wily creature—not to be taken advantage of so simply—would spread its wings, stretch out its long neck like a pointer, and scoot for the next bit of brush. There, modestly veiled, it would stop suddenly and peer about at the pebbles as though disappointed in not finding something it was looking for; while the bachagha, with baránis fluttering and billowing wide—as if mimicking the prey—would run after it. Apparently unobserved this time, he carefully circled for a better position, but the bird

reared its head above the ambush, casually discovered its pursuer, and ducked for another retreat; again the bachagha swooped after it.

Soon the bustard grew weary of this game, and pecking in a dissatisfied way at some imaginary morsel, stood in the same spot for a while, as if trying to think up something new. Dailis waited for it to keep its head still an instant; he seemed almost near enough to murder the uncoöperative creature with the butt of his rifle. Suddenly the bustard straightened out all its neck and peered fixedly into the distance. . . . Perhaps something it had planned to do that morning had slipped its mind. . . . The hunter was drawing deadly aim. The trigger clicked . . . but no report followed!

Dailis struggled impatiently with his jammed rifle. The bird resumed its desultory pecking. Once more it raised its head. Once more he aimed. . . . But the bustard had seen him first, and ruffling its feathers as though provoked by his persistence, it spread its wings, and with a final sprint, flapped morosely away. . . . For a few moments we all watched, waiting for it to land again, but it flew steadily, apparently remembering at last an important engagement elsewhere. The bachagha turned about and started back.

But he was smiling when he stepped into the tonneau, evidently appreciating the amusing side of the

episode. "There's no use in chasing after bustards on foot," he said, with a sly look at Yusuf. (How the bird would have enjoyed seeing the automobile lumbering after it over the uneven desert!) Failing to bring down the first game sighted, is often considered by the Arab huntsman an ill omen for the rest of the day; and the bachagha had been telling of a hunt he had planned for the afternoon! Whether or not he was superstitious, he did not try his luck again, even when we later saw a gazelle, the game he had really hoped for. During the rest of the trip we contented ourselves with peaceful conversation. Yet his one unavailing attack on the wild life of the district had caused him some consideration, for just before we reached the caravansary, he suddenly leaned forward and said, with a chuckle: "I just happened to remember. . . . It seems to me that I have encountered that same bird before!"

The caravansary, situated on a low plateau, is visible for many miles. Its high white walls inclose an open square of two or three acres—ample room for several caravans to rest in comfort and safety for the night. During the day, herds of sheep, goats, and camels graze near by. A short distance from the north wall is a well where they are watered. The road passes between a grove of botm-trees and the single entrance to the stronghold, a square opening let into the thick wall of sun-baked clay, and easily

wide enough for motor-cars to drive through. The massive iron-bound doors opening into the court-yard are barred at night, but in the daytime are hospitably open.

This desert fortress is very attractive, clean, and much better appointed than the usual caravansary. It is the private property of the Jellúls; the bach-agha, who bought it some years ago from an uncle, El Haïd, uses it personally as a sort of "country estate" and base for hunting expeditions. Inside, just to the left of the double doors and along the adjoining wall, are arcaded stalls for horses, cattle, and other beasts; directly ahead are rooms for guests and visitors; while along the right wall are the private quarters of the bachagha, the dining-room, and a well-equipped roofless kitchen just beside the entrance.

In the court were some chickens, and small wild birds which fluttered in to search for crumbs. Dogs of various breeds roamed aimlessly about; some were stretched lazily at full length in the shade. Sometimes one would catch a scrap thrown out of the kitchen, and the others, barking and growling noisily, would chase him until he either swallowed the morsel or dropped it in the dust, for his persecutors to snarl and snap over to their hearts' content.

Apart from the lusty life of these dogs, the *salughis*, or gazelle hounds, seemed to lead a separate

and less earthy existence. They are slender dogs, but muscular, supple, and fairly tall, with pointed muzzles, pendent ears, and short, silky fawn-colored hair, longer on the ears and tail. In Arabia they have been bred for centuries, even before the Hijra, and the same or similar dogs are pictured in cuneiform records thousands of years old: their pedigrees are therefore of unequaled length, exceeding even those of *borzois*, greyhounds, and other breeds of similar build, which are said to be extractions of the same original strain. One peculiarity of the salughis is their woebegone expression when not engaged in the hunt. Drifting soundlessly by, like disembodied spirits, they scarcely notice other dogs, and only occasionally stop to look up at a human—as though commiserating with a fellow-being. They follow game by sight rather than by scent; and the blue-eyed salughis have even more remarkable vision than the usual variety. But as much as their keen eyes, speed, and endurance, the gazelle must fear the sense of impending doom which seems to hound along these graceful, silent coursers.

Swarthy burnúsed men came up to the bachagha, obviously glad to see him, and kissed his robe in salutation; for each he had a personal word of greeting and a blessing. The most interesting of these retainers was the chef, whose fame has been spread far beyond Algeria by all who have tasted of his

cooking—a stalwart, cheery individual, wearing not a burnús, but a sort of military jacket (with a heavy gold chain looped across the front from pocket to pocket), baggy trousers, and a white hlafa.

The dining-room walls were hung with handsome jerbis, and Dailis proudly called my attention to a picture on the mantel at one end of the room; a picture of his father, vested in white baránis—a very handsome man with snowy beard and piercing dark eyes. And when we were seated, this aristocratic shaikh seemed to be looking down at us kindly out of the little wooden frame above the empty place at the head of the table. It was as though the retired bachagha himself were presiding, and had graced our meal by the Beduin blessing: "*Haykom Alláh wa en Náby! Eflah!*" ("Alláh and His Prophet give you life! Partake!"), to which we should have replied, "*Unaat Alláh aleyka, ya maazib*" (May the Lord be gracious unto thee, my host.")

Although our arrival had been unexpected, a very delicious luncheon was soon served—hors-d'œuvres, omelet, vegetables, cold meats, unleavened bread, and salad. But by the time the last of the chef's appetizing creations had been finished, the afternoon was well advanced and, in order to reach Ghardaïa that night, we had to take our leave. When I thanked the Bachagha Dailis for his kindnes and hospitality, he apologized for the unavoidably impromptu

luncheon, and reminded me of my appointment for the falcon chase, which, he promised, would not lack preparation. Wishing me God-speed, he added:

"As you journey on, carry with you a glad heart; in the desert, as everywhere, it is always welcomed."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Journey to the M'zab

We followed the road winding south into the Sáhara toward the home-land of the M'zabites and "the desert of sand." The stony plains became more calcified and torn by ravines, more barren and blanched in the glare of whitening sunlight; the sky itself paled and seemed to recede, as though withdrawing all vitality from these limy wastes. A cold wind, sighing and droning, swept ceaselessly on, leaving in its wake sand-choked tufts of vegetation—a desert bleak and drear and dead. There were no dunes, where unvaried sands speak not of death, but of eternity, and the anticipated oasis lures the voyager on like the hope of sighting land at sea. No color, save the sallow umber of the soil, the pinks and creams of rocks ghastly as painted clay. No shadows and no shade; only a few skeletoned shrubs and withered blades of grass. Long since, spring's transient film of verdure had vanished into the maw of a parched wilderness; and now a winter of life prevailed which seemed interminable.

Sometimes the way was almost undefined, and often it dipped into depressions. Rising out of these, I would eagerly scan the sear and broken plains. . . . But there was always the same stark horizon, beyond which the desert's crust must surely crumble into nothingness. Accentuating the solitude, a single telegraph wire—now near, now far—whined and strummed, thin and unsheathed in the wind, as it stretched its uncompanioned string across the muffled sounding-board of the desert. Again, almost parallel to the tracks we followed, a caravan trail curved back and forth, grooved deep, and desolate.

The grim perfection of this unwatered weariness, the sovereignty of devastation! An art that had never known living beauty, had wrought an antithesis of life, had attained the ultimate and perished in its achievement. A baleful fascination gripped the mind, fixed the senses until they had gained complete perception, until they thrilled with the very challenge and strangenes of the scene. . . .

Some of the men who through the ages had worn the caravan trail deep into this desolation, may have felt irresistibly drawn to the wilderness beyond the rim of their roadway. They knew the dunes, the sure fertility of the oasis, yet always with apprehension steered their caravans across sandy seas from one verdant pool to the next. But those who ventured braver things for freedom, left the oases and wan-

dered with their flocks across this other desert. And once caught in the random quest,—hunting after pasturage, migrating always with its passing,—they so loved this directionless life that they nevermore returned to former ways.

But winter had banished even the spirits of these nomads. Once, though, we saw a horseman galloping, far across the plains, like a white Pegasus winged with streaming scarlet barânis. Soon he disappeared in the distance as if bearing some urgent message into the world beyond. Later, a small band of Tawarik, guided by no visible trail, came out of the southeast, pressing hard against the wind. The chief rode a handsome dark-bay stallion, others sat easily on the swaying backs of slim whitish camels, while some marched lithely along, wide, flat sandals giving ease to their free strides.

Long-barreled guns slung across the backs of these roving tribesmen were almost hidden by their loosely belted, wind-swept garments; and except for narrow slits through which their eyes glittered, their faces were concealed by dark-blue cloths swathed about their heads and giving them a sinister, secretive appearance. As the caravan cut obliquely across our road, no answer or sign of recognition came to Yusuf's friendly salutation; these somberly garbed men of the desert passed on with the silence of shadows.

The Tawarik, who are largely of Berber extraction, call themselves *Imoshagh* or "Noble People," and under the influence of their wild nomadic life have gained unsurpassed fierceness, stamina, and courage. Unlike either Berbers or Arabs, they have developed a caste system, probably as a protection in their contact with the negroes of the Sudan, with whom they have not mingled to any great extent. There are five castes: the nobles, the marabouts, the serfs, the cross-breeds, and the slaves; and frequently whole tribes, although living by themselves, are vassals and have to pay tribute and fealty in war to the noble tribe, usually of better blood, which has conquered them. They have a tribal form of government, with a chief chosen from among the nobles and similar in power to the Arab shaikh—a contrast to the rule of petty councils and "rights" of the individual among the Berbers of the mountains. The Tawarik generally have delicately formed features, straight black hair, and black or gray eyes, and are tall, strong and rangy, yet small-boned and slim, quite unlike the stocky Kabyles,—a physique possibly acquired from desert life itself.

These people have roved over the Sáhara for twelve hundred years and probably longer. In ancient times they also occupied a part of the coast, now Tunisia. Here they were known as the Avrigha, a name still used (Aourghen or Avrghen) by one

of the desert tribes, and which was the probable origin of the name of that old Roman colony Africa (corresponding to northern Tunisia). Although never entirely subjugated by earlier invaders, the Avrigha retreated to the desert before the Arabs, gave up the country of Ifrikya as it came to be called, and so got their Arabic name, Tawarik or "Quitters" (the singular is Tarki, from *terek*, "to give up"). However, their own name of "Noble People" perhaps more accurately describes their appearance and temperament as compared with the average Berber, even though their conception of nobility is rather primitive. They gave up Tunisia, but they have retained their freedom and the purity of their blood among the upper castes; and they gained at least partial control over half the Sáhara. During the eleventh century, they were the backbone of the Almoravides (al-Murábitún), "the Marabouts" who overran North Africa and finally Spain.

Men of the desert frequently wear a part of the head-dress across the mouth and nose as a protection against sand and dust, but the Tawarik,—although the women do not wear veils,—rarely remove this cloth, called the *litham*, even among their own immediate families, and so have been known to the Arabs since ancient times as *Mulathamún* ("Wearers of the *Litham*"). Only the nobles wear the dark-blue veil and dark-blue or black tunic, while their

vassals wear white; the lithám is regarded as a sort of sacred token of the race, and there are many legendary accounts of its origin. However, the women—lacking veils and also virtually without moral restraint—are the important element in the Tawarik social structure: a chief is never succeeded by his son, but by the eldest son of his eldest sister; and the social standing of any child is determined by the rank of the mother and not that of the father; more than any other Berbers, the Tawarik preserve the matriarchy of their ancient ancestors, the Iberians.

As if purposely to define this matriarchy as mother-right and not mother-rule, the Tawarik men (who occupy the "executive positions" in the tribe) are unusually masculine and warlike: only the serfs, vassals, and slaves do manual work; every noble carries a rifle or firearm of some sort and a straight, two-edged dagger thonged to his left forearm. In full regalia, he also carries—often with the assistance of a squire—a sword similar to the dagger in design but about four feet long, an iron lance more than twice this length, and a large shield of several layers of hardened leather. The most distinctive armament of the Tarki is the flat weighty stone bound to the outer surface of his right forearm,—an auxiliary shield, a means of giving crushing momentum to stroke of lance or sword, and, in extremity, used as a club or missile.

Perhaps even more interesting than these war stones are the boomerangs which the Tawarik sometimes use for hunting. Boomerangs were also used by the ancient Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Dravidians, and are still used—with various modifications—in northeast Africa, southern India, western America (by the Hopi or Moqui Indians of Arizona), and, of course, by the Australian "aborigines." It does not seem likely that this peculiar weapon would be as naturally developed by any primitive people as the spear or bow and arrow; more likely that the boomerang would be a weapon characteristic of a particular group of peoples, even though these were only distantly related. A similar, peculiar development, the svastika, while common at the present time throughout the world, was primarily characteristic of the "heliolithic" culture of the early Brunet Race, though now known to us by an Aryan name (Sanskrit: svastika, emblem of good fortune, from *svasti* or *su-asti*, "well-being"). And it was introduced first by these Brunets to the Mediterranean basin and India, along the Chinese coast, and across the Pacific Islands to the New World.

There may be a very interesting connection between the svastika and the boomerang: the svastika (卐 or 卍) suggests a spinning motion; some boomerangs are cruciform, and some of the svastikas used in Navajo designs suggest cruciform boomerangs

with figures impaled on the double points on each arm. The more or less magical significance of the svastika may have been derived from the magical properties of the boomerang: for instance, in the case of the light-weight hunting boomerang, the well-known property of returning to the thrower; or the remarkable range of the heavy non-returning boomerang used for larger game and for war—a range about five times that of the javelin used by the ancient Greek army, about twice the range of their bowmen, and equal to the longest range used in archery contests with the English longbow. And as to the origin of the Australian primitives, one theory at least connects them with the ancient, very ancient, Dravidians, who were probably familiar with the boomerang, like their modern descendants in the south of India. Hence, the svastika, symbol of well-being, may first have been a conventionalized representation of the boomerang and the luck it brought to the primitive Brunet warriors and huntsmen, forebears of even such unusual people as the Tawarik of the Sáhara! At least such is my personal notion of the svastika, whether or not original or true.

The Tawarik have mastered the stern life of the desert, and to them belongs a good deal of credit for developing the mehari, the pale fawn-colored or whitish dromedary of the Sáhara, said to have been originated by an Arabian tribe of similar name.

The camel (Arabic *jamal*, or *jemel*, only distantly related to the two-humped or Bactrian "camel" of central Asia) has been bred in the Arabian peninsula since prehistoric times, probably longer than the horse, and a great many varieties have been developed, although the pedigrees are not kept quite so meticulously as those of thoroughbred Arab mares. The dromedary (originally a Greek word from a root, "to run"), really a riding camel, like a mehari, has far greater speed and can travel without water much longer than the ordinary variety. Formerly the Tawarik, mounted on mehara,—swifter and stronger steeds, over long distances and sandy soil, than the best horses,—made raids even into the well-settled regions of Algeria and Tunisia, the ancestral home land of this people; and they taxed all caravans passing through their desert territory, or in reprisal confiscated the merchandise. But in recent years such activities have been curbed by the French, who now of course control the tariffs of these countries.

The Wearers of the Litham are still scattered over a million and a half square miles of desert (of which about five square miles are cultivated), and maintain an independence little disputed in the remote Sáhara, where they rule a large number of the negroid tribes. The Tawarik, because of their isolation, have only partially adopted the Qur'ánic code; and although they are nominally Muslims, many of their customs

are a unique reversal of the Prophet's teachings. Of late years, however, an increasingly large number have been enrolled by the Sanúsiyya. The Tawarik therefore have at least the opportunity of an Arabic education. Their Berber dialect, Tamashek, is scarcely a written language, but they have an alphabet of their own,—usually known to a few women in a tribe,—which has been derived from the Punic (Carthaginian) version of the Phenician alphabet, parent of virtually all alphabets east of Mongolia.

The Tawarik "language" is, indeed, a sort of boomerang: like other Berber dialects, it is Hamitic and therefore allied to the ancient Egyptian, which has written records (while lacking a real alphabet) seven thousand years old; but Tamashek is written in a Semitic alphabet, and Semites used the original alphabet, cuneiform. However, the particular Semitic alphabet which the Tawarik adopted, Phenician, was derived largely from the Egyptian, and therefore Hamitic, hieroglyphics. Then, after completing this linguistic circuit, the Tawarik have adopted Arabic in religion and in such trading as they do, thus forsaking the Hamitic. Some of the differences between these Noble People and the Berbers of the mountains, may be due to the fact that the Tawarik have not only retained a Punic alphabet, but may also have a smattering of the Carthaginians' historic blood.

The Tawarik proved their worth when they retreated, beaten but unconquered, into the desert, and when they swept back to join in the transient Berber supremacy over Barbary and Spain. They have known nothing and lived by nothing but war since they gave up their country on the coast; what effect the rather Fabian policy of the Sanúsiyya will have on these masked men of the Sáhara, is yet to be determined.

The peaceful M'zabites are isolated, like the Tawarik, in the same desert, but offer a striking contrast: their evolution has been determined primarily by their interpretation of Islám, an unshakable conviction which caused their exodus from the fertile coast and has dominated their thousand years in the Sáhara. This same idealism, in the spiritual life of both desert Arabia and desert Africa, inspires the Wahhábís and the Sanúsiyya; and the Tawarik are only beginning to be reached by a Reformation upon which the M'zabites, so different in character, in customs, and even in appearance, have built their very existence.

For the Khárijites, the Wahhábis, and the Sanúsiyya,—successive manifestations of this Reformation,—have preserved original Islám, at least in the land of its source, the desert. And the M'zabites (as Ibádite-Khárijites) have done likewise, independently of the others. They not only have built, in a barren wilderness, their civilization of seven cities,

but even to-day actually live up to the religious ideals for which they faced an unknown Sáhara ten centuries ago. And if the M'zabites have lived apart from other Muslims, it was because they were forced into isolation by the alienized Islám of another day.

We came to a fork in the road and followed the way quaintly designated "Pour les automobiles," around the buttress of a hill and through a shallow ravine. The country became even more broken and barren. But as we penetrated farther and farther into this hitherto unfamiliar region, a welcome sense of the desert's people became so constant and all-pervading that when we passed a few seared palms like tattered parasols half buried in sand, beside the scarcely recognizable ruins of an old caravansary or village, the glimpse of a ragged little girl scurrying out of sight behind one of these broken walls was nowise astonishing.

After crossing the wide, stony bed of the Wadi Sudan, the road passed between high rocky cliffs and then seemed suddenly to end straight ahead, where tall palms made a wall of vivid green, intensified by mellowing sunshine and deepening purple shadows. In this oasis of thirty thousand palms is a M'zabite town younger by six hundred years than its sister cities of the Wadi M'zab: Berrian itself is built on a hill, and the mosque, with its oddly tapering

minaret, crowns the summit. Soon we were passing walled gardens,—the ages' meed of toil,—and from the wells where water was being drawn for the flocks and camels came a shrill creaking of pulleys and a monotone of voices. Men of dignity and serious mien, clad in snowy robes, were sitting beside the whitened stone walls of houses and shops or in the doorways; our passing was unheeded, save by a few solemn round-eyed children.

Leaving this sudden vision of verdure, we rode again into a desolate region, around uneven hills and over bleak plateaus; on our left, higher hills jutted boldly into the fading blue. And as sunset ignited the full vaulted sky and reflected from the chaotic splendid wastes below in myriad planes of changing color, the wind, which had blown steadily all day, diminished its unwearied sweep, as if to spread the banner of the sun's decline, yet save the gleaming fabric from dissolution. On a lonely hill, the dome of a marabout's tomb blushed with brief semblance of vitality in the afterglow, and then cooled and hardened, veiling its sepulchral pallor with the first swift shadow of night.

Stars pierced tiny whitening flames through a cobalt hemisphere above, and in the gleam of the head-lights wraiths of mist spiraled up before us, like fantastic specters nodding and beckoning us on across the desert. "*Alors!*" said Yusuf, "we follow

the ghosts of former days." And in truth they did suggest the adventurers whose caravans had voyaged over the Sáhara to the Sudan, even before the tragic flight of the M'zabites into their desert retreat. . . . The mist spread in a limitless silvered sea, on which we seemed gliding between earth and starry sky. Abruptly the filmy firmament ended; the road widened and dipped down a rocky ledge into a great natural basin, and far ahead were the scattered, twinkling lights of Ghardaïa, queen of the seven cities.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Seven Cities

On the walls of the dining room at the barracks (where I had found accommodations, as there was no hotel in Ghardaïa at the time), hung several large oil-paintings of the desert—the work of a French officer formerly stationed there. They gave a striking impression of the Shabka's weird beauty; one canvas in particular, of great depth and perspective, was really impressive. It showed an immense blue-shadowed ravine where the red caps and breeches of two French officers, tiny figures mounted on pale camels, were the only contrasting points of color. The picture of these soldiers—alert and tensely apprehensive of what might lie in wait behind the rigid, blasted deformities of this desert—fully portrayed the courage of the advance patrol.

But there are other pictures, of another patrol, which very likely will never be painted; pictures of the long retreat to the M'zab which the builders of its seven cities made more than a thousand years ago. . . .

The first picture: A village of well-built stone houses in the mountains near the Algerian coast; a circle of black-bearded, pale-visaged men in simple cloaks and tunics, gathered around a man in Arab attire who was sitting in the open near the meeting-house and speaking to them earnestly. They were of the Zanáta, a large tribe whom the Arabs have known since first coming to North Africa; and the year was in the early second century after the Hijra*, about half a century before the Holy Roman Empire and that eight-hundredth Christmas Day when Leo III was to crown Charlemagne at Saint Peter's; Cordova, chief city of Muslim Spain, still had a year or two to wait for the Falcon of the Quraysh and the Western Caliphate. The little group of Zanáta were Muslims, but they were listening to the story of Islám, told with a sincerity and fervor new to them. These were the ancestors of the M'zabites.

The man in Arab attire spoke of the Beduin who cherished the primary significance of the Faith, and who had rebelled, nearly a century before, against their less serious-minded fellows, and had returned to the Arabian Desert—to a rigid and literal interpretation of the Qur'án. He said that these men were called Khárijites ("Outgoers," the first schism in Islám), but that they were the true *Muslimín* and had formed into six groups, common in the belief

* The Hijra: the "Flight" of Muhammad from Mecca, 662 A.D.

that the caliph should be elected or deposed according to his ability and religious merit, and not according to family rank or power. He told how some of them, in their zeal to carry out their ideals, and resist the odds against them, had gone to extremes, but that ʿAbdulláh ibn Ibád, the leader of the Ibádis or Ibádite-Khárijites, had tempered the fierce puritanism of his followers with a more truly Muslim tolerance and moderation. So it was that the Berbers of North Africa, with the impetus of this Reformation, shook off the control of the Eastern Caliphate; and these pale-visaged Zanáta left their mountain retreat for the many cities of the coast.

The second picture, a decade later: To the east was the rising sun and, silhouetted, the sacred city of Kairawán (the "Resting Place") founded by ʿOqba ibn Náfiʿ a century before. A little company made haste along the westward road,—a few men splendidly mounted but simply garbed, a few camels, a troop of men and women and children trudging silently behind. Only an hour or so before, the voice from the "shining tower" (the sturdy brown minaret, now black against the morning sky, of the broad-domed mosque of Sidi ʿOqba) had resounded the *adhán* with more than usual fervor, and the muedhdhin had looked upon the familiar peaceful scene which he was soon to leave: the prospering city, securely walled, the fertile plain, the river, and, two or

SUNSET

The sun rims the vast tracery of shadows, and burns into silent evanishment below the brim of the desert

three leagues beyond, Sabkha Sidi el Hani—a misty gray lake stretching away to the southeast.

But then the gates had opened, and many groups of families, carrying a few bundled possessions and accompanied by their animals, hurried away, each group led by some elder, to the west, and to the south, and to the southeast, leaving the olive groves and gardens and the City of Repose. For word had come to Kairawán of the death of Abú 'l-Khattáb,—one of the five Ibádite disciples to North Africa,—who had been the first imám of the Ibádite Empire* and whose descendants, the Banú Khattáb, were to be an Arab dynasty of Fezzan for about three centuries. And Abú 'l-Khattáb's army had been defeated by the general of the Eastern caliph; Kairawán, capital of Ifrikya, was soon to have a new master.

So it was that the Ibádites had answered the call to morning prayer and then set out hurriedly for the west and the south and the southeast; some were to journey on six hundred miles or more across the mountains and the desert, to the ancient oasis town of Wargla. But at the head of the little band on the westward road, with their backs to the morning sun and the silhouetted city, rode 'Abdu 'l-Rahmán ibn Rustám, another of the five disciples, to whom had

* The Ibádite Empire once included a large part of what is now Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripolitania.

been given the command of Kairawán, and who was now become the second imám of the Ibádite Empire, and was to build a new capital, Tahert—a year before the building of the Round City of Baghdád. With him rode his young son, 'Abd al-Wahháb, who was to succeed his father as imám; 'Abd al-Wahháb was to lead the Ibádites back toward the east to regain most of Tripolitania; and seven other of the Banú Rustám were then to rule as the successive princes at Tahert.

And among the men trudging faithfully behind the leader were a few of the pale-visaged Zanáta, clad in simple Arab attire, like their imám, their shaven heads clothed in white, their black beards carefully trimmed. The long straight beams of the ascendant sun measured off an arc nearly the length of Algeria between them and the mountain pass where Tahert was to be—a journey perhaps twice as long, a thousand miles or so, taking a month or haply two. But it was not these Zanáta who were to quit the march.

A third picture: The Atlas Mountains, east southeast of Oran; the sun hidden behind hills to the left, but not yet set, and still shining on the mountaintop a league or so down the valley. The valley had a ruddy glow, not from the western sky; for at the foot of the mountain Tahert was burning; and a swift-flowing river, curving around the city, shone with swirling

yellows and reds, fierce reflections of the flames. Stragglers of a long line of white-robed figures, hastening up the valley, were still silhouetted in this last glory of their capital, the setting sun of their empire. It was the end of the third century after the Hijra: Alfred, who had united England, was dead, and the Danes were planning new raids; the Carolingian princes—descendants of Charles Martel and his grandson Charlemagne—were soon to be extinct; the Western Caliphate of Cordova was just rising on the full wave of its splendor, but the Eastern Caliphate of Baghdád had passed its prime, and the Ibádite Empire of North Africa—in which the ancestors of the M'zabites had a goodly share—had perished.

A general of the Fátimids, a new Shí'ite dynasty, had set torch to Tahert, the city Ibn Rustám and five thousand of the faithful Ibádites had founded by first building a mosque—at the mouth of a mountain pass to the Saharan plateaus, and near the spot where a legendary lioness had reared her cubs. But Tahert was now only to be remembered,—for its thriving commerce with the caravans and with the coast, for its library and learned men.

It was Ya'qúb ibn Rustám, the last imám, who led the vanguard of his stricken people onto the first weary stretch of the Sáhara; they would march steadfast across seven hundred miles of desert to

Wargla. He was a Berber, with perhaps a strain of Arab blood, but, giving pious encouragement to his followers, he saw that they were nearly all Zanáta—steady, deep-set black eyes; pale, creamy skin; features not quite Berber, nor yet Arab. Many were the Berber tribes who had enjoyed the prosperous days at Tahert, only to surrender their realm and their beliefs to the latest army which attacked them, as had the Berbers many times before. But these Zanáta, rather than forsake Ya'qúb and renounce their creed, turned their backs on the mountains and set out with their imám toward the southeast, where, in the darkening desert sky, one cloud may have flushed roseate with reflection of the setting sun. . . .

There is another picture which these Zanáta finally painted and chiseled and built on bare hills and barren brinks in the M'zab—the civilization of seven cities which has endured and which thrives to-day. Every European who has visited this country—since French soldiers occupied it forty-five years ago, and built barracks, and painted pictures of this fantastic desert—has been impressed by its almost unbearable, yet inspiring desolation. There is no more forlorn region in the Sáhara—a chaos of rocks and sand and ravines reaching far away to El Golea and the great sea of dunes to the southwest. During an entire winter, three or four inches of rain may fall, sometimes none for years; rarely a cloud-burst causes a destruc-

tive, profitless flood; the summers are withering. But this crannied wilderness was yet more sinister, more forbidding, before the M'zabites built their cities, dug their thousands of wells, and before the oases brought forth a hundredfold and more.

The Ibádites did not come to the M'zab in one sudden migration, but straggled in from the east, year after year, for more than a century. . . . They were leaving Sedrata, which they had founded near Wargla after their retreat from Tahert, and which was now threatened with war; for the people of Wargla, the oldest town in the Sáhara, were jealous of the industrious prosperity of these people. But the Ibádites' creed was one of peace; so it came about that they once more set out into the desert. In summer the wind was at their backs—hot, dry, dusty, stifling wind, often veering and beating down on their flank from the north, sometimes rising out of the south to churn up dust and sand and pebbles with the screaming madness of the sand-storm. And in winter they faced the cold, bleak wind from the north and west—an empty, fearsome wind, chilling their bones with its ceaseless note of utter desolation.

The first of these straggling migrant bands of city-bred people, led by a few caravaneers, ventured across to the Shabka, a "network" of dry ravines, about the middle of the fourth century after the Hijra, before the pagan kings of Poland and of

Russia accepted Christianity; and just a century before the Norman conquest of England; or two centuries before the birth of Chingíz, Khán of the Moghuls, and three centuries before his grandson, Húlágú ibn Túlí ibn Chingíz Khán, was to burn and pillage Baghdád, slaughter a million citizens, and murder the last of the 'Abbásids, who had been caliphs for five centuries and a quarter.

The Zanáta reached at last what seemed like a great shallow, waterless bowl, or the bed of a dry lake. A little farther on they came in sight of the green tuft of an oasis, far across this valley of the Wadi M'zab; a small oasis with a well or two, or perhaps a natural spring, where caravans occasionally stopped on the way between Algiers and the Sudan. But now the oasis was deserted, except for a few black tents of nomads. These tent-dwellers also lived in caves, and had one small town, Metlili, about seven leagues to the south; they called themselves the Banú M'zab and said they were Zanáta, too. The new-comers came upon other oases like the first, and they praised Alláh al-Hasíb the Reckoner, Who had counted their faithful steps across the desert, and Alláh al-Jabbár the Repairer, Who had restored their strength, and Alláh al-Wannáb the Bestower, Who had provided for them a refuge in which they could build homes and dwell peacefully therein. In the course of time they took the name of

the nomads, and thereafter were known as the M'zabites.

The last migration came about a century later, from Sedrata—a city with hundreds of thousands of palms, irrigated by many wells and waterways; a trading-center for caravans which made the round trip as far as the ancient empire of Ghana in the western Sudan, a year's journey, five thousand miles. Háshim es-Sedrati had been one of the original five Ibádite disciples to North Africa; and at Sedrata died Ya'qúb, the last imám; his tomb is still a place of pilgrimage for the M'zabites. Sedrata, like Tahert, had passed through the four temporal phases of the Faith: the state of glory, of resistance, of persecution or devotion, and the state of secret or flight—this time to the M'zab. But, by then, emigrants had already founded the first five cities, the original M'zabite confederacy: El Ateuf, Bu Nura, Melika, Banú Isguen, and Ghardaïa.

For more than nine centuries they remained in comparative seclusion, digging wells,—thousands of wells, deeper and deeper,—enlarging their cities; and they paid El Arbaä of El Aghuat for protection of their caravans. Until the time of the French occupation, forty-five years ago, the M'zabites were virtually independent and without serious interference from the outside except for one unsuccessful attack by the Turks under the Pasha of Algiers,

Salah Rais (A.H. 962, or 1555 A.D., the same year he had his soldiers bombard Kubr er-Rumia and they were driven away by "black wasps"). As if stimulated by this single thrust, the M'zabites built two more cities during the subsequent century, at some distance from Ghardaïa: Guerrara and Berrian. Thus did they find both prosperity and peace in their seven cities of the desert; for "whosoever flees in the way of God shall find in the earth many a spacious refuge" (Qur'án, IV, 101).

So have these Ibádite Zanáta completed the panel picturing their long retreat to the M'zab. There have been other Zanáta, some showing little promise, some ruling in Morocco and Tlemsán and Tuat, but none with the originality and strongly individual characteristics of the M'zabites. The same might be said of the other Ibádites, like those of the island of the Lotophagi or the cave-dwellers of Tunisia or the sultans of Zanzibar. But very likely the Ibádite Zanáta who followed Ya'qúb into the desert had more of the Phenician blood which the Arabs have long attributed to the tribe than did the other Zanáta; and the desert subsequently strengthened, selectively, the Phenician characteristics of these people: courage and endurance as pioneers and colonists; peace and good-will as settlers; unchangeable devotion to city life and the ability to build cities; and, finally, extraordinary ability in commerce.

The Arabs have been called the Phenicians of that inland sea the desert; and the M'zabites may even more aptly be called the Phenicians of North Africa. Prospering in the M'zab, where previously nothing prospered, they have become preëminently the traders and retail merchants of all North Africa, keeping their industries for their own people and keeping their money in circulation among themselves, not in banks owned by others. And, they are buying back Wargla.

These people have been tried by the strict puritanism of Islám and by the desert and not found wanting, and they have been amalgamated, by its hardship and isolation, into a distinct race, differing from other Berbers, even from other Zanáta. The M'zabites have an Arab faith and the fundamentals of Arab culture, and have adopted the very element of the Arabs, the desert, but they have developed an architecture of their own, and other distinctive features of their civilization. The uniquely tapering white minaret at Ghardaïa, like those of other M'zabite mosques, is a testimony of this simple and enduring civilization of seven cities. It is indeed a "shining tower."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Spirit of the Desert

THE valley of the Wadi M'zab, isolated, half fertile, half desolate, shuts off its vision of the desert by a rim of sandy slopes and limestone cliffs reddish against the narrowed false horizon. Brinked on the shelving side of a slope are the barracks; and across the river channel, in the center of the wide ravine, is Ghardaïa, a dazzlingly white city on a conical hill. Concentric rows of flat roofs resemble irregular giant steps, converging to the mosque which crowns the summit, where the white minaret, as chastely beautiful and austere as an obelisk, points up toward the immensity of luminous blue sky. The smoothly rounded corners of this isolated tower taper in unbroken lines to its apex, each corner ending in a bluntly pointed pinnacle; and near the top on each side is a low arched window. Nothing is wilfully decorative, nothing overtly ornamental; its simplicity is restful and instinctively esthetic, and, like a natural formation, it imparts a sense of genuine harmony.

Laden caravan camels, unmindful of the bur-

dened little donkeys meekly mincing along beside them, march with stately strides through the gates of the town; withered old men and young children drive their herds of goats and sheep out to pasture. Tall palms grow beside the town walls and along the edge of the dry river-bed, dotted with many wells, where all day long water-carriers are busy filling jugs or shaggy goatskin water-bags; and the wind, flowing over the edge of the desert, catches up the shrill creaking of revolving windlasses and the murmur of voices, and carries them up and away.

Across a wide space of deep golden sand, to the right of Ghardaïa, a viaduct of many lofty arches spans the Wadi M'zab, and ends at a point about half-way up the coral-tinted rocky promontory upon which Melika is built. Under the bright noon sky the uneven profile of its buildings, projecting above the high walls of the town, suggests a medieval castle; but at sunset it is a fairy palace, softened and glorified in a nimbus of changing colors.

On the right bank of the channel, a tree-bordered road leads to Banú Isguen, where nomads, who come to trade, pitch their low black tents outside the town, in the shelter of its walls. To the left along the river's course almost to the limit of vision, is a shimmering blur of dark green which indicates an oasis; and between it and Ghardaïa are many little white

domed kubbas, where sometimes at dusk candles twinkle, like earth-bound stars.

Beyond the rim of this varied panorama, beyond the rocky confines of this civilization caught in a crevice of the desert . . . a vast wilderness stretches away in all directions, infinitely regular in endless irregularities, free from life and the harassing vicissitudes of the world. Here the spirit is pensive, yet assuaged and comforted. Here are peace, certainty, permanence, a theme of natural progression without change, a seasonless solitude where the wind warms and cools, and the sun varies only by sextant and compass—always in the same simplified rhythm of sunlight and shadow.

In the morning, far away over the desert, a delicate mirage glows and fades and glows again, floating distant and vague, just above the horizon. Through the bright quivering air, it is like a deep-blue lagoon between shadowy palms, a promise of still rarer beauty far beyond. The air is so serene, the desert so still. . . . Perhaps it sleeps. Perhaps only with the touch of starlight does it awake, and during the harsh brilliance of the day stretches out its shadows and lies dormantly inert, dreaming dreams of loveliness that live and have their being in . . . the mirage.

Suddenly this visionary delight vanishes. The

wind whispers and then brushes across the desert, lifting little eddies of sand that sift and skim along, roaming and migrating always, like the nomad, across this continent within a continent, this reversal of the other world.

The sun flames higher, the desert lies trembling like a sea of fiery glass, each particle gleaming and flashing in the stark white light, and the distance stretching on and on forever as in a hall of mirrors. The desert pours forth endlessly and melts below the vast thin circle of the horizon; you are left isolated on top of the world's huge globe, and crushed by the awful spaciousness of a sky which, as you go farther into the desert, rises in fathomless height, so unbelievably remote that no thought can reach its beginning. Its transparent blue deepens in contrast to the solid incandescence of the desert . . . except the sky of noon, a polished dome, a withering brilliance. . . . Now, in this blazing intensity of sand and sky and sun, the day is pinioned: all is space, glaring, crystalline; there is no thought, no time, no existence. . . .

And then once more the sunlight is golden and mellow, until a rush of lambent ethereal colors fills the hollows, flashes across the flat sandy stretches in numberless tones of fleeting vividness—as though a crucial angle had been reached, and the cloudless sky had changed into a prism, bathing the desert in

a glorious galaxy of brilliant refractions. With a final painted radiance, the sun rims the vast tracery of shadows, and burns into silent evanishment below the brim of the desert.

Night comes swiftly; night and a new desert eternally old in its recurrent sameness. Bright stars flash their quick message across the skies; far horizons fade in the melting dusk, the glimmer of nomad camp-fires glows brighter in the shelter of sandy mounds, and the desert awakens into a living thing, delicately luminous, shadowy, elusive. In this great tranquilizing space, there is escape from the trifles of the world. A cool wind sweeps by like a conscious breath, the spirit soars toward the star-gemmed vault above, into an eternity of time and space. And even as the memories of peoples and cities are smoothed and softened away by the Sáhara, so even the Sáhara dwindles beneath the awesome glory of half a universe.

The desert is beauty, pure and idealized. Its individual colors and charms seem inconsequential save as they form its composite loveliness; that knows no expression unless by spirit music accordant with the rhythm of the desert. Just what the desert in its entirety means to its people, those of other races can never hope fully to understand. It is the foundation of their lives; its oases quench their thirst as might

the streams of any fertile land, but more beautifully, more emphatically, with the killing lifelessness about them. It is more commanding, more dominant than mere land. Unlike the convenient table where most men walk and gather crops,—their thoughts busy with other things,—the desert is stark physical necessity which can never be dismissed from its people's minds. They feel its impelling mental stimulus, its inspiration.

After the day's journey, the caravaneers give praise to Alláh, and gather about the camp-fire to forget hardships and fatigue, to laugh and to tell stories. With their joy in the splendor about them, instinctively they sing songs of the desert and of the poetry of desert life. The pulsing of a drum and the sweet melody of flutes mingle with their voices in the wild, plaintive music that is such a happy necessity of their lives, that hums across the wastes, taking new form and modulation with every convolution, and floating far out over the desert until it is no longer the song of the caravan, but the voiceless murmur of the desert itself.

When the hour of relaxation and comradeship is past, they roll themselves up near the fire and peacefully sleep. Perchance their watch-dog barks at some shadow more sinuously lurking than the others. And were there no other description of the desert, the lonely, vigilant barking of this dog would portray

the immensity of space—not by an echo, but by some softly dying reverberation, some eery overtone that lends to each sound the hollow, unimpeded note of distance.

Perhaps an Arab leaves his sleeping comrades, walks a little way from the camp across the pale cooling sands, and stands silent for a while, listening to the voice of the wind and gazing with awe and reverence at the starry diadem crowning this varied wanderland. The sky is a deep-blue crystal, yet soft and warm as velvet on the face of heaven. The stars are so real, so detailed in form, almost within reach; he is inspired and comforted by these stars, that guide and counsel him as he travels through the night . . . that are so changeless, so luminous, so transcendent. Perhaps he worships them, unconsciously remembering the ancient Sabæanism of his ancestors.

The desert creates an intense individualism. Each dune is a separate integral, that crawls with slow disfiguring contortions,—imperceptibly slow,—like some monster of primal life, humming to the song of sifting sand, muffling a creaking inward quiver as the sand sifts faster. Long hours of solitude give to the people a personal abstraction and isolation which are scarcely interrupted during the day of traveling in the desert. The men file silently along beside their camels, only rarely talking in groups of twos or

ARAB CARAVANEER OF SOUTHERN ALGERIA

The desert is his Field of the Cloth of Gold

threes; and even then the inescapable immensity of sand and sky seems to separate one from another.

But while the desert has created this individualism, a more soulful quality than mere self-sufficiency or self-reliance, it has also brought about a bond of remarkable sympathy and loyalty among individuals. From the earliest legend, the Beduin has instinctively regarded fealty to family and clan as his unquestioned obligation, and this feeling, coupled with the individualism and equality of the desert, has formed the essential democracy of desert life, a democracy unique in the history of the East.

Even to the stranger, the Arab gives the utmost hospitality for at least three days, without inquiring name or destination or purpose, although he may be, himself, in great need. For food, drink, and all good fare are of the "goodness of God," *kheyr Alláh.* So in the desert there is a pleasing etiquette among its people. Caravans travel like independent states, their emissaries establishing relations with other caravans and oases by means of formal messages. And at the beginning of a long journey, the caravan is blessed by some man of piety—like the benediction of an army going to war.

Desert formality often has its basis in the exigencies of desert life: caravaneers scoop in the sands for wells like hidden gold, and when their wants are

satisfied, they carefully cover the treasure for the safety of the next wayfarer; and if they follow a difficult trail, they leave bits of clothing on chance brush by the way, and set up again the landmarks that have fallen. Yet even without these apparent guide-posts the caravan finds its way. To the eye of the adept, there are no trackless wastes. And there is no truly "solitary quarter."

Still greater than the bond among humans, in the desert, is the necessity which links the nomad or caravaneer with his camel. This canny beast, so full of vagaries and tricks of personality, is more of an individualist than its master, and certainly more aloof. The swan-like neck and soft gray-white coat of the pure-blooded mehari lend to this swiftest and most beautiful of camels astonishing grace and delicacy. It holds its strange head high, with an air of unhuman intelligence, greater than that of mere beast, widely different from the thinking of man, almost supernatural. And with unconscious pride it overlooks the man, overlooks the great panorama of the desert with the same superiority which seems part of this desert itself; with the same indifference to man, the same turning of the back on man's petty thoughtfulness, inquisitiveness, and ambition.

The eyes of the mehari, shielded by jutting brows and long silky lashes, are large and soft, and separated by nearly the full width of its head—not so

much organs of sight, as great orbs, filled with their own fire and significance. Their expression is remote, not so much seeing as surveying. And sometimes, when the bleaching desert is most terrible and the way lost, it is the nomad who thinks and does not know, and the camel that does not think but knows. So these two trudge along together, the beast as detached and aimless as the desert itself, the man searching the mystery about him for an answer to the inner urge of reason and intelligence, and haply pondering his inscrutable companion, that he loves and nurtures as life itself. And, too, in desert mythology, Death rides a camel.

It is no wonder that the people of the desert feel its magic, yield to the suggestive whisperings of the wind, and let the human instinct of rationalization create an invisible world about them. Indeed, the spell of the desert so weaves itself into the soul of desert-dweller or caravaneer, that his life becomes half poetry; each incident, however strange, however commonplace, is clad with the luster of phantasy and hidden significance. Even the Qur'án speaks frequently of the jinn, and of shooting stars pelting the devils who eavesdrop at the gates of heaven. Yet as the nomad meets beauty with song, mystery with imagination, he faces adversity and peril with true realism, tempered by a serene faith, and an invincible sense of humor. The desert is his Field of the

Cloth of Gold, where is held the princely tourney between the nomad, monarch of individualism, and the flame-bodied jinn with whom he peoples the empty vastness about him . . . where even the silence has a voice that is heard. . . . So from birth he is enmeshed in the desert. He learns some of its mysteries, loves it, and lives happily. He does not try to understand too well, but knows it as a carpet of life. And in the end the desert reaches out toward him and takes him back, silently, swiftly.

The desert is the same huge primal force it was at the dawn of its creation, awesome in its vastness, terrible in its storms and creeping inundations. But there is a veil of loveliness, a spirit, not only of the Sáhara but of every great desert which has mapped its tawny ciphered form upon the earth. Sometimes, it seems, this spirit is the mirage—the desert's dream. Sometimes it is the wind—a voice, a flight of thought-winged beings. . . .

The desert is an emptiness which magnifies each thought, each feeling, each emotion. It is subjective, never obvious, never definite, and endlessly suggestive. It is like a crystal, or a fire, or a cloud of smoke, receptive, mystic; where men perceive the unknown, and read the past, the present, and the future. It tends to be filled with the fruits of the mind, and the lives of those who are drawn to it; yet it is primarily passive, alluring. And, always

DUNES OF THE SAHARA

It is like a crystal, or a fire, or a cloud of smoke,—receptive, mystic,—where men perceive the unknown, and read the past, the present and the future

unquenchably receptive, it creates a yearning for infinite fulfilment, drawing forth the greatest of longings and aspirations. And in this vast world of light, where darkness is yet illumined, there is not loneliness, but oneness of all things; not quite the image, sound, and touch of past and present and what is still to be, but a composite presence which all the senses singly or together could not give, a oneness all-embracing.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Ghardaïa and Its Legend

THERE was a young Arab at the barracks, 'Abdu 'l-Qádir, who was employed regularly as chauffeur, but adroitly assumed the functions of *valet de chambre* and waiter for the occasional guests accommodated there, while his pretty French wife did the cooking. He too was exceedingly good-looking, and so representative a type of his race that his European clothes, worn with a chechia, seemed incongruous indeed. But his knowledge and appreciation of the people and cities of the country proved invaluable during my stay in the M'zab, for he was an amiable adviser and always willing to suggest a destination and conduct the trip.

When we were starting out one day for a visit to Ghardaïa, he asked if I had ever heard its legend, and offered to show the way to the one place where the legend might best be told. After crossing the wadi and entering the gates of the city, we climbed up crooked, narrow streets, and then, nearing the summit, turned into an unfrequented byway, and

came to where the rugged hillside had been left bare of buildings—a patch of gravelly soil, a few small trees with shady foliage, and the pinkish surface of solid rock, almost perpendicular and cleft by a fissure about a cubit in width. A woman standing before the cave drew her veil closer upon seeing us and hurried away. She had left a shallow lamp, like a saucer, burning in one of the rough niches beside the cleft; several similar lamps, almost empty of oil, also were burning, while in others the wicks were dry.

Gesturing a lean brown hand toward the little niches, a deft appreciative gesture, 'Abdu l-Qádir began the story:

"Observe, *Lalla*, how the rock has been blackened by the burning of many, many wicks. Since the very founding of the city, the women of Ghardaïa have never failed to keep lamps freshly burning here. So have they kept in memory the legend of this thin-mouthed grotto, often saying their prayers before it and making it their shrine in this city. For here it was that very long ago, when the M'zabites were yet new in the land, a young Beduin maiden found shelter. She had been falsely accused of a sin for which her tribe found no forgiveness, and they had left her to perish in the desert.

"Now, it came about at this time that a certain M'zabite chief, Yahyá by name, who was a very

brave and pious and wise man, found reason to search for a site upon which to build a new city. For he had led his people safely through great dangers to the M'zab, and they had settled in a town already builded, but there was not sufficient water for all, and they wished for a mosque and a citadel of their own. So it was that he set out with a few of his men, and they came to this rocky hill, which was suited for their purpose, could they but find water near by.

"For three days they searched for a spring, but found none. And on the fourth day one of their number, returning from the town, brought back a donkey laden with food, and tools for the digging of a well. But he brought little water, and said that the town could spare no more, and that he was sore afraid there was no time for the digging of a deep well. So it was that they set about the work speedily; but at the end of two days' digging, they found the well still dry.

"On the third day, Yahyá climbed to the top of the hill, that he might be alone to find wisdom in prayer, and he went therefor to the spot he had chosen for a mosque to be builded. And after prayer and a while of meditation, he then slowly descended, walking around where the streets were to be laid, and sadly thinking of how well a citadel there could be defended and how tall the minaret would be and

how it could be seen from great distances . . . if only water could be found.

Of a sudden, a loosened stone rolled down from a steep and rocky place above him, and he, looking upward, saw this cleft in the rock, and upon climbing to it discovered the cave and the Beduin maiden hiding therein. Now, he saw that she was weak for want of food, and so greatly frightened that she trembled; but with gentle words he bade her come forth, and promised her food and care and kindness. So he helped her down the hillside to the encampment and summoned his men, bidding them fetch what they had for her comfort, and they fed her and gave her water though they had little. Then while she rested they set about their work again. So it was that, from words spoken among themselves, she learned of their purpose and of their sorry need.

"Now, when the heat of noon had passed and she had gained some strength, Yahyá came to her, saying that he would bid one of his companions saddle the donkey with a cloth and set her upon it and conduct her to the town, where she could recover from hardship. And then she said many words of gratitude, praising his goodness, and told what had befallen her, and how she had feared him and his men and likewise feared to venture to the town, for she had been told that the M'zabites were a cruel people

and would not suffer any one to live near them, nor permit any one to enter their cities, on pain of death. But he comforted her, saying that this was not so.

"Then when he made to call one of the men from their digging, she said that there was yet something which she first must tell, and bade him follow her, and led him to a little mound farther down the dry channel. There she showed him a rock nigh buried in sand, and bade him move it from its socket. This he did, finding that the sand was loosely packed and that the rock rolled easily, and that many stones had been placed beneath it. These he quickly emptied out, leaving moist sand. And he gave a shout of great joy and scooped into the sand with his hands, and called upon his men, who ran quickly to him. And when they were come they praised God, for there in the shallow well had gathered a tiny pool of water.

"So they were enabled to found Ghardaïa. And it came to pass that the good Yahyá took the Beduin maiden, whose name was Daïa, for his wife, and their happiness was great, and his people prospered, building a mosque and a minaret which could be seen from afar, and homes to dwell therein; and many, many deep wells were dug along the channel. But the time came when Daïa died, after many good deeds, and from that day to this the women of the city have kept little lamps burning to her memory, beside this cave."

A "SHINING TOWER"

The uniquely tapering, white minaret at Ghardaïa . . . is a testimony of this simple and enduring civilization of seven cities

The first five cities, the authentic M'zabite confederacy, were built within a radius of about five miles, up-stream along the Wadi M'zab. The fifth city, Taghardeit, or Ghardaïa,—with now nearly twice the population of any of the others,—has come to be the capital, the chief commercial center, and the mother city of Guerrara and Berrian. Altogether, the M'zab has fifty thousand inhabitants; about one fourth live in Ghardaïa, and of these a thousand or so of the men are usually absent on business throughout the littoral and hill country of North Africa.

Near the base of the city, toward the east, is a Jewish settlement, the Mellah, walled off from the rest of the town; the Jews, now numbering fifteen hundred, first came as craftsmen, about five hundred years after the founding of Ghardaïa. For certain reasons, they are not permitted to use the M'zabite wells, and consequently have had to dig wells of their own; but they do not own gardens in any of the oases. There is a synagogue in the Mellah; on one wall of the main chamber is a scroll from the Pentateuch, and there is the usual central pulpit, *almemar* (from the Arabic *al-minbar*), hung with bright silks. The adjoining ritual bath is a shallow tank or trough, in which the water is changed only once a month.

Each M'zabite city is a unit, and surprisingly self-sufficient. The chief industry is, accordingly, agri-

culture: the caravan trade and the commercial ventures of the men to the coast, although important, are sources of wealth upon which the community is not dependent. The M'zabites build their houses of limestone and other local materials; clothing, furnishings, and the like also are made from their own raw materials, and their home industries even afford considerable merchandise for exportation. So these people have built self-supporting cities in the desert.

Their architecture, since they first lived in the desert, has been free of any influence other than their own: it is a simple and appropriate interpretation of their feelings for their faith and for this beloved land of exile. Their cities, situated so as to have the greatest natural facilities for defense, together with the best possible water-supply, have always been founded by first building a mosque, the fundamental design of which is also used for schools, houses, and other buildings. The mosque occupies the most inaccessible and dominant position, and there is only one to each of the modern cities, although at Tahert the forebears of the M'zabites constructed a Great Mosque having precedence over others and corresponding to a cathedral. Because of its position, the M'zabite mosque is, in time of need, used also for a storehouse, arsenal, and fortress, and during the ordinary course of affairs it is a meeting-

house for the shaikh or caïd and his council, the *halga.*

This type of government, although resembling that of the mountain-dwelling Berbers, is really a development of the Arab schools, or circles, which gathered about the early Khárijite leaders. The five Ibádite disciples to North Africa, two of whom became the first and second imáms of the old Ibádite Empire, were originally members of such a halga. And naturally enough, after Ya'qúb, the last imám, had been defeated by the Fátimids,—had retreated to Sedrata, there renouncing his leadership,—the ancestors of the M'zabites founded independent cities, each governed by a shaikh and halga. This chief and the members of his council were chosen for their piety, wisdom, and general strength of character, and he was expected not only to perform the multifold duties of the archetypal Arab shaikh, but to become a religious leader like the first Ibádites of North Africa.

In Ghardaïa, as in the other cities, the members of the halga built their homes around the mosque, while the less distinguished citizens had their dwellings farther down the hillside, but always within the wall. When their numbers had sufficiently increased, a new wall was built in a larger circle, so that the present wall extends even beyond the hill, to the

flat floor of the valley. But the immediate vicinity of the mosque has remained entirely residential, exclusive of all except the halga and their families; consequently, this section of the city has retained a very appropriate dignity and quiet.

Through the solidly builded city, streets weave like a spider's web, some circling concentrically around the hill, others at right angles, leading from the mosque down to the gates and high, thick walls; outside is the oasis of fourscore thousand palms, with the gardens and summer villas of the citizens. The live stock is taken to pasture anywhere in the vicinity of the town where grazing may be found, and every evening, at sundown, camels, donkeys, goats, and sheep are driven within the walls; the inhabitants who have been abroad for the day return, and the massive gates are closed and barred, even as centuries ago.

Leaving the Shabka at an early age, to make their fortunes in the commercial centers of the coast and of the Tell, the men usually remain away several years. Then, instead of selling out to the highest bidder, the M'zabite always sends for a relative to whom he teaches the business and lends the capital for a successful start, returning, himself, to his native city with the rest of his earnings. Thus these men, who read and write Arabic well, prevent their carefully organized industries from passing into the

hands of others—a defensive attitude which can readily be understood from the history of the M'zabites. They have many admirable qualities, though often maligned like any other race of character.

The mosque is precisely at the apex of the hill. A slender young M'zabite, in spotless white, opened the door into the *sahn*, a court sheltered from the wind and open to a flood of radiant sunshine and to the sky of flawless blue. Older men, similarly garbed,—students, and members of the halga,—sat in quietly conversing groups; and the peaceful, murmur-woven silence was tinseled with the twittering of hundreds of small white birds,—pretty, tame little creatures with a few black feathers flecking their wings,—fluttering, scolding, and clinging in clusters to the masonry and projecting beams.

On three sides of the sahn are porticos and doors of various sizes; above, arcaded balconies; and although there was no fountain, jugs and qirbis containing water for ablutions hung from most of the pillars. The court is paved with stones, unevenly mortared together, and whitewashed like the rest of the masonry. A door in the base of the minaret leads to a narrow twisting stairway; and from the roof of the mosque is an inspiring view of Ghardaïa, its oasis, and the rock-rimmed Wadi M'zab. Another door, by which is a bench for footwear, gives en-

trance from the court into the softly illuminated prayer-room: a high ceiling supported by pillars of palm-wood worn smooth and polished; the floor strewn with grass mats; and two mihrabs, indicating the directions of Mecca and of Ya'qúb's tomb. A unique feature of M'zabite mosques is the *takerbost*, a room with little curtained alcoves where ablutions may be made. The water is stored and heated in an enormous copper caldron suspended above a fire-box; the roof of the takerbost is conical, and provided with openings to let the smoke out.

Leaving the quiet surroundings of the mosque, we made our way down the hillside, the sounds of the lower city and market section becoming increasingly distinct. But above other sounds a steady droning, sometimes breaking off only to resume again, could be heard, like the swarming of bees. Presently we came to the *mehadra*, a little boys' school, where they were reciting the Qur'án, which comes first of all their studies. We climbed a narrow stair to the doorway of an anteroom where was a jumbled pile of well-worn little red and yellow bábúshes. Sitting at the far side of the large square room beyond was the master, his pupils in a semicircle before him. They instantly become silent when they saw us, and stared with round eyes. Even the master, holding a staff in one upraised hand, was as motionless as one on whom a spell had been cast.

When we continued on our way, the recitation began again, rhythm, vowels, modulations fusing steadily into one softened sound. This was the "Reading," the Qur'án—reading until those who are too young to read, themselves, or have yet never had the privilege of learning, shall well remember the words, shall never be without knowledge of a just and upright line of conduct for their lives.

The Qur'án was not always a written Book, but was first remembered and repeated, a súra at a time. Yet there were those who knew that the true words could not forever be remembered; that, being given from father to son, they would be in diverse ways recited. So the Recorders thought not only of the Message they themselves received, but of how it should be best preserved for those who were to follow. When the Prophet spoke, there were these few who made the record: some chose a palm-branch bare of bark, some chose flat white stones,—thin stones if they could be found,—some wrote even on their garments, on their belts and shoes; and there were a very few who owned a page or two of parchment.

Now, in the year following that of the Prophet's death, Zayd ibn Thábit, one of the Recorders, was commanded by the Caliph Abú Bakr—who so had been counseled by 'Umar ibnu 'l-Khattáb, who was to be the second of the Successors—to gather the súras into one Book. Not easy was this task, and

often Zayd searched long for a writing of a revelation, but found all save a few, and these he learned from the Reciters, who had heard and had remembered. Then, nearly two decades later, Zayd made a second copy, upon being so commanded by Uthmán, the third of the Successors, and upon careful proof of each word with the aid of three of the Quraysh, who spoke the speech of the Prophet, and were thus best able to decide upon the words.

Upon one of the market-days we went to the suk of Ghardaïa, to make some few purchases and to watch the trafficking and trading, barter and commerce of others. (A suk is a street, a market street or even an entire market section.) It was well before the heat of midday when we reached the city; too early, in fact, for the trading to have gained full stride, and so we took a walk through other parts of the town. Sometimes the labyrinthine little byways were almost tented over by jutting walls of houses on each side; others, hardly wider than the span of a man's shoulders, were yet open to the sky, though often we had to press close against the walls to permit the passing of people we encountered. Toward the northern city wall, we came to a bath-house, cave-like, dim, and partly hewn from rock; the roof supported by shiny palm trunks, and echoing with the splash and purling trickle of water.

Farther within a deeper darkness, live coals gleamed a baleful red, where some one unseen was heating water for a bath.

Returning toward the market, we passed through many a suk lined with all sorts of cubbyhole shops, or occasionally stopped to watch a tailor stitching with painstaking precision on gandurah or burnús. In one out-of-the-way place we came unexpectedly upon a tiny stall where a sinister little old man huddled on a pile of rugs—a Seller of Dreams. His eyes were quick and bright as a ferret's, but for the most part he kept them discreetly lidded, and the tiny bowl of his long-stemmed pipe exactly filled with hashísh. He sat very still, as if attending the steps of passers-by, to remember those who did not tarry, that he might yet ensnare them on another day. When some trader, perchance, would stop, the little man would light the pipe with a live coal from a brazier, take a preparatory puff, then proffer the pipe to the buyer of phantasies, who, after a few inhalations, would return it. And the vender always thrust it beneath the rugs upon which he sat, apparently without fear of burning them; but, then, it was a vehicle of dreams, not of actualities. . . .

White arcaded walls frame the market square of Ghardaïa: a bare plot of hard ground, slanting just a little at the foot of the hill—and this tilt gives a graceful accent to the severe simplicity of the square.

Here a thickly pressing crowd eddied and circled, seeming never to find time for purchases,—merchants, buyers, beggars, housewives, servants, children,—filling even the little side streets. The caïd's executive chambers, a two-storied structure, are on one side of the square, and almost directly before the door is a solid whitewashed platform; at one end, toward the east, a plain monument which pedestals a wrought-iron lantern. This is the Prayer Stone, a simple mosque for those who come to the market of the M'zabites, but do not agree with their interpretation of Islám.

As the day advanced, the white buildings became more intensely white, and the whole square seemed to level, no longer sloping with the hill, but tilting back toward the towering sun, as blue shadows, shortening, withdrew into the archways. In the center of the square, traders made ready for departure; their shaggy dark-brown camels, bearing bales of merchandise, were moving slowly through the throng, as if in careful conservation of their strength for utmost hardship. One *naqa*—a female camel—had given birth, and a crowd watched the little one's first wabbly efforts to stand. It was a lighter shade than even the slender creamy-gray or fawn-colored mehara that so easily overtake other camels, with long, swift strides which Arabs compare to the noble pace of the ostrich; and indeed there is a bird-like

AT THE BARRACKS

'Abdu 'l-Qádir in the car he called "Amérique," and a French soldier in civilians

quality to the mehari at top speed, an even more wingèd flight, in a sense, than that of the ostrich.

The young pack-camel, drooping its head sorrowfully and leaning against its mother, seemed undecided whether it preferred the mehara or its own breed. Both venture without fail into the desert, one swift and saddled, the other heavily burdened, slowly led; and both, garrulously complaining many times, will yet not quit the task until, sinking silently to their knees, they do not rise again. So, it seemed, the young one drooped its head and wondered if its first venture had been happy.

On some of the mehara were mounted Tawarik, each man crooking a knee round a pommel fashioned like a cross, each wearing lithám and robe of blackish blue, a contrast to the white habit of a Père Blanc who paused to let them pass. But shouldering between the camels of the caravan were portly M'zabites in snowy garments not unlike the priest's; and other M'zabites sedate in blue; Arabs more gaunt and bronzed, wearing, perchance, scarlet cloaks, and often brown; Jews perhaps in black, prescribed in days gone by; and unveiled Jewesses in silks of brighter and more variant hues than any in the flaring sunshine of the square.

There were, too, the ever present donkeys, bearing panniers of vegetables or brush for fuel,—donkeys overtired but never overbearable,—and the

usual bleating flocks of sheep and goats, scattering through the nigh impenetrable mass of shouting and gesticulating marketers. Along the walls of the square were deep baskets and heaps of provisions, in unexpected variety and number: oranges, pomegranates, green peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, mandarins, dates, henna-leaves, beans, barley, and wheat, grain made for kus-kus, sugar, oil, wood, nuts, and raw cotton, wool, cloth, and clothing, candles and soap. Before some shops were whole carcasses of mutton. And bakers were busy with their long-handled wooden shovels, doling out from primitive ovens the flat round loaves, to be piled on boards or delivered to children and housewives who had brought their own plats of dough to be baked.

The products of M'zabite home industries were numerous and interesting, particularly the woven woolen goods,—baránis, jerbis, carpets, divan covers, saddle-bags, and the like,—which are sold not only here but throughout North Africa. The little girls while very young are taught the weaving of rugs, and when older are able to do the more delicate work on articles of ornament and apparel. The rugs are very closely woven, without a pile, and the larger ones are striped deep red and black with a design in the center; those most characteristic are very long and narrow and more intricately decorated, though not with so great detail as pouches and other smaller

pieces. The patterns, straight-lined and richly colored, are varied by change in size and tone—each design fixed by tradition and known by a particular name. Prayer-rugs are not made by the M'zabites, who use fiber mats instead, usually imported.

The looms are permanent fixtures in every home; but before the fleece is woven, and after being washed, dried, combed, and spun into thread, it is treated with a mordant and dyed. All this is done by hand, and the dyes, entirely vegetable, are extracted from various plants found in this region. Gall-nuts, grown on a variety of botm, or pistachio-tree, give a black dye, and tannin, which is also prepared from palms and other native vegetation. Black is made in many other ways, the strongest dye from pomegranate bark—a source, as well, of grays and tones of blue. Clearer, richer blues come from indigo, yellow from reseda, shades of orange from certain extractions of botm, and dark red from madder. The secret of these dyes has long been handed down from mother to daughter, the older women particularly taking great pride in their knowledge and skill. The rugs wear extraordinarily well, and the individual charm of each is a precious recompense for the months and even years which are spent in its weaving. More might be sold, and at a greater profit, if they were made by quicker methods; but it is refreshing to read in these rugs, instead, the

message which skilled hands alone can give. . . .

M'zabite merchants, who are proverbially honest, use either a system of fixed prices, especially for business done away from their home land, or the method of bidding, which they prefer for their own markets. 'Abdu 'l-Qádir called this to my attention, saying:

"Do you notice the merchants, *Lalla?*—how they run quickly from one buyer to another, each time displaying their wares with new eagerness and each time looking more disappointed if they do not get the bid they had hoped for?"

And in fact they never seemed pleased to wait for customers to come to them, but would make the round of the market with their merchandise, only to find, if they failed, new energy to begin again.

The M'zabites' thousand years in the desert have no doubt developed their courage and perseverance, like other races, but it would seem that they owe their particular prosperity to qualities essentially their own. Even before their coming to the Shabka, nomads and caravaneers, who were also brave and persevering, stopped here on their way, and some made it their home. But it was the M'zabites who alone had the imagination, not to say audacity, to dig deep wells and build cities and make a thousand palms grow where one had grown before.

And imagination is a quality which develops slowly, and which cannot be taught.

In this wise I spoke to 'Abdu 'l-Qádir, and he answered:

"Yes, it is true. The M'zabites, though their deeds gain little acclaim, have done what other men would not have even thought of trying. Many times have I thought of the M'zabites and of the French and of the nomads, traders, and Tawarik, who come to this city; of the White Fathers who come only to help the people; and of those from many lands across the seas who come to look at the people. I think of my own race, too. And one lesson I have learned is to tell men by their imaginations. For no matter how brave and strong they may be, their deeds will never be free and great, unless they have imagination in some way different and better than the imagination of others."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Oasis and the Magic Tower of Banú Isguen

EARLY one afternoon, as I left the dining-room, I was met by a small dark-eyed boy in a brown and white gandurah who extended his hand and, with the gravity of a prince, made a little speech: he, the son of the Caïd of Banú Isguen, had come to pay me his father's compliments and to accompany me on a visit to the oasis of Banú Isguen.

This oasis is some distance from Ghardaïa and, paradoxically, in the opposite direction from Banú Isguen. Our road followed the base of a rocky ridge, a grotesque formation of reddish stone, gashed by deep ravines with overhanging, precipitous ledges. In the crevasses, dark, mysterious shadows lurked, though the midday incandescence of the sun was never brighter. The place was deadening, melancholy, so incomplete and desolate that the bounty of a thousand springs might bring forth, it seemed, only limy crystals, caking salt, perhaps an opal circlet colored like no living thing—but not verdure to re-

fresh the grim monotony of flame-hued rock, to give shade more sightly than the sightless purple shadows crouched beneath the crags.

Yet, a league or so farther along and we saw the cool, dark green of an oasis filling a wide basin in a ring of even more barren hills of rock and sand. The road crossed a high embankment, damming the channel to conserve occasional rains, rounded a turn, and came to a small gate in a low wall. There we left the automobile, for a walk through the gardens.

Beside narrow paths, leading to all parts of the oasis, were irrigation ditches through which clear water flowed. Vines clambered over the white walls of the M'zabites' summer homes, while a variety of flowers and ripening fruit—orange, mandarin, apricot—made splashes of color more vivid for the rich bowering green about them. Overhead, the fronds of unnumbered date-palms sighed and rustled in the cooling wind; beneath them, flecked with light and shade, grew barley, oats, wheat, and rye, covering the ground with bright-green carpets; and in a later season other greens to come—legumes, lentils, tuberous herbs, the fruit of roots, and vines of vegetables.

We stopped beside a well, to watch a very picturesque method of irrigation. Two stout pillars of sun-baked clay, built up on opposite sides of a thick well-curb, held between them a smooth round palm-

wood cross-bar. Over this, a very long rope slipped back and forth, one end fixed to the tandem harness of a donkey and a camel, the other to a large, shaggy, dripping water-bag of several goatskins. As the beasts walked toward the well, up the incline of a towpath companioned by a trough, the goatskin was thus lowered to the water, filled as they slowly turned at the incline's top, and drawn up as they walked away. Then the goatskin, reaching the cross-bar, automatically emptied into the trough, the water running down into the irrigation ditch. A woman, stick in hand, turned the incongruous tandem at the end of each migration and kept them to the task, while a man attended to adjusting the goatskin and the rope. The camel and the donkey looked very droll harnessed together, with the donkey leading. Each accepted tedium in characteristic way: the donkey, old and gray, and quite resigned, ambled pattering along, flapping one ear back and forth, like a band-master beating time to which no one paid heed; while the camel, emitting belching groans and gurgles as though loathing the endless plodding to and fro, stalked lumbering after its meek, humiliating leader.

From the slow pulsing of many of these most primitive "pumps," the vital circulation is kept in constant flow throughout this oasis, called the Garden of Wells. Wells are the foundation of the M'zabites' civilization and the result of years of in-

PALM GARDEN

And the flower of every oasis is that most precious palm, the Phœnix

domitable toil without the aid of modern implements; some are within the walls of the cities, and many exceed a depth of three hundred feet—equal to the elevation of Ghardaïa's minaret above the flat floor of the Wadi M'zab. Even more than fine cities, the oases of the M'zabites are the very flower and emblem of their splendid struggle.

And the flower of every oasis is that most precious palm, the Phenix. Palms are the most useful and among the most decorative trees of the tropics; there are more than a thousand species, producing divers fruits, from dates to cocoanuts, and numberless other familiar and important products; but the one species most anciently and most widely known is the date-bearing Phenix. This tree, upon which human life in the desert has depended for so many centuries, grows across an enormous stretch of the world, from the tropic islands of the east Atlantic, over Africa, Arabia, and Asia to the northern bounds of India, a great territory strewn with gardens, groves, and oases in a straight distance of six thousand miles.

Records unearthed of ancient civilizations in these lands give rules and regulations for the date-palm's cultivation. Before these civilizations, the tall male trees, ten to sixteen times the height of a man, relied on the permeant flight of insects and ever restless desert winds to carry pollen to the shorter, more thickly foliaged female palms which bear the

blossoms and the fruit. But since the very beginning of cultivation, this vital golden powder has been gleaned by hand to insure more certain fertilization. Even to this day the pollen clusters are sold in the markets, and there is scarcely a date-palm in Arabia or the Sáhara which is not given care—often as much care as the pleasure garden's exotic fruit.

Those dates which are not sun-dried, crated, and exported, are consumed locally in their natural ripened state, or dried, stoned, crushed into a pulp, and pressed into cakes for more compact use by caravaneers. Dates are often fed to animals, even dogs, while the stones themselves may be soaked and softened to make fodder for camels and cattle. There are hundreds of Arabic words and phrases used for the palm and for its fruit; each phase of the ripening date has its particular name, and it is described as an emerald bud in a circlet of gold, as a ruby, and as a honey-filled crystal globe. But the tree supplies, as well, many local manufactures and simple luxuries: timber, paper, mats, screens, fans, fuel, thatch for houses and sheds, fiber for cordage, ropes and articles of clothing, troughs and water-pipes, tannin, dyes, wine, wax, resin, oil, sugar, starch. . . .

Because of its utility and beauty, the date-palm has been celebrated in song and poetry since most ancient times. The Arab poet Nábigha, singing praises of princes dwelling near Palmyra, said that

they would "keep the Feast of Palms, when maidens pale, whose scarlet silken robes on trestles hang, greet them with odorous boughs and bid them hail." Another poet, Mutí', about two centuries later, when writing of his lost love, addressed two palms growing closely side by side in an oasis of 'Iráq: "O ye two palms, palms of Hulwán, help me weep Time's bitter dole! Know that Time forever parteth Life from every living soul." From this it came to be said that there are few faster friends than the two palms of Hulwán. About the same time, the Falcon of the Quraysh, though caliph of a new realm, is said to have appealed to the single date-palm which had been transplanted to his garden in Cordova:

> O Palm, thou art a stranger in the West,
> Far from thine Orient home, like me unblest. . . .
> Ah, thou wouldst weep, if thou hadst tears to pour,
> For thy companions on Euphrates' shore.

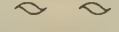
But the palm has been far from a stranger to the literature of the West. The Romans named it from the likeness of its frond to so close and symbolic a conception as the human hand; it was used, too, as the emblem of victory—an emblem of victory even on the high seas, as in Nelson's *palmam qui meruit ferat*. Another of Nelson's race wrote: "For authors nobler palms remain," and from "the palm of martyrdom" of the first great English author, to the

most famous, who would and did "get the start of the majestic world and bear the palm alone," its symbolism of preëminence, and likewise the analogy of its frond to the human palm, have been borne in verse and prose many times around the world.

The Greeks chose another good name for the date-palm, calling it "phenix" as in the modern scientific term *Phenix dactylifera,* the "date-bearer," in which the Greek word for "date" also means "finger," though likely derived separately from a similar-sounding Semitic name. Curiously, though irrelevantly, the Greeks named the "Phenicians," masters of the ancient seas, from the word which was later used for palm. The original mythological phenix of the ancient Egyptians was a strange and sacred bird, symbol of the sun—an eagle plumed with red and gold, rising reincarnate from its ashes every five centuries, thousand years, or so, and ever pinioning back to the desert of Arabia whence it came.

And the M'zabites, who very likely have a strain of Phenician blood, have in another desert fostered, and thereby themselves maintained, that other phenix, equally immortal, *Phenix dactylifera,* the palm of amber-lucent dates. There are many parables of the palm, and the people are advised to treat it "generously" that they may gain strength from the goodness of its fruit. Indeed, in poem and legend,

it is not only a friend like the two palms of Hulwán, but even a kin of man, created from the same primal soil; tall and upright; the sexes distinct; dying from decapitation and unable to regenerate an arm or branch—for the palm lacks the cambium layer of other trees. Yet, before the onrush of the sand-storm, it arches back, only to spring again toward its zenith, upright and unbroken, like the fine-steel sword of the righteous man assailed by many foes. And, as palm trunks were builded into the first mosque, so have they been built into the mosques of the M'zabites.



As we were leaving the oasis, my little escort told me that his father had also invited me to tea that afternoon, and we continued on past Ghardaïa to the city of Banú Isguen. Yusuf was told to drive within the gates,—an exception made for invited guests,—and there we were met by a courier who walked with us toward the home of the caïd. Passing through the market square, we found a brisk trade in kus-kus pots going on; they were very black, plated silvery inside, and sold in such great numbers that it seemed we had come to a kettle-fair! The little prince left us for a moment, to consult a group of elders—evidently relatives and members of the halga—who were sitting within a portico to one side. Stopping before them, he gave the Arabic salu-

tation customary among most Moslems, "*Salám 'alayk*" ("Peace unto ye"), and bowed very low. They gravely acknowledged his greeting, but continued their conversation, while he remained respectfully at attention until the particular phase of their discussion was finished, and then they asked him to state his question. Having received the answer, he again bowed low and returned to join us.

The meticulous respect which he had paid his elders, though himself a son of the caïd, was indeed an eloquent expression of M'zabite good breeding. He likewise showed a most admirable though quaint dignity while escorting us through the city. But when we arrived at the home of the caïd, this young son's duty toward the new guest was evidently at an end: with an air of great solemnity and a most direct look from his large dark eyes, he shook hands, wished me a pleasant visit, and then, giving a joyous shout, ran off down the street to join a group of playmates, who greeted him with equal enthusiasm. And I felt that his manly little handshake—rendering good wishes in a mode foreign to him, yet all the more charmingly polite—was a greater honor than would have been a formal but familiar salaam.

The caïd's residence is near the top of the steep valley slope upon which the city is built, and has a commanding position above the market square and

business section below. The door had soundlessly opened, and a little old man salaamed nearly to the floor, again and again, taking a backward step with each bow, as we entered. He then conducted me through a dimly lighted room where rugs lay in many thicknesses upon the floor, to a glass-roofed court in the center of the building.

Except that it was illuminated from above,—the many panes of variant color giving a beautifully blended, softened sunlight,—this court had more the appearance of a handsomely furnished reception hall. Several doors opened to other parts of the dwelling, and around the walls, just above these portals, ran a narrow balcony, supported at the corners by slender carved columns; from the balcony a graceful arcade supported the roof. The general tone of the walls was a soft pink, while the pillars were a delicate polychrome of pink, blue, and gold. This distinctly Moorish splendor was an unexpected but tasteful contrast to the severe white simplicity of the usual M'zabite architecture.

The caïd arose from beside a tea-table to welcome me, and, after a cordial exchange of amities, introduced two other guests, whose arrival had prevented his escorting me to the oasis himself—a French man of letters and his wife. The scholar was a slight little man, very polite and considerate, and very much interested in the M'zabites, about

whom he was preparing a thesis. But as his rather overshadowing wife—apparently responsible for strategy and tactics as well—asked most of the questions, the total gains were not great.

The caïd happened to be a large man, and his surroundings well suited him: the many cushioned divans around the court gave it an atmosphere of comfort and ease, and the expression in his twinkling dark eyes bespoke a strictly pleasant, determinedly pleasant, attitude, analytical but none too explicative. His conversation was reserved, yet engaging, and after I had partaken of dates, botm-nuts, tea, and honey-cakes, served by two very efficient attendants, he expressed himself as gratified that I had enjoyed my visit to the oasis, and asked if I should like to see the mosque and tower of Banú Isguen.

The town, about half the size of Ghardaïa, was founded a few years before, on the bank of the Wadi M'zab to the east and south, and has become the second largest commercial center of the Shabka, dealing more than the others in foreign wares. The upper and older section was built atop a monticle on the edge of the rocky plateau beyond the valley, while the rest of the city has been constructed farther down the almost precipitous sides of a natural buttress, to the flat floor of the wadi, where is now the commercial quarter. Like other cities of the M'zab, Banú Isguen is surrounded with a high, thick wall,

and the mosque is in the most easily defendable position. But because of the danger of attack in the olden days, from the open desert, an additional stronghold was built as part of the upper wall—a square, only slightly tapering tower rising about eighty feet above the rampart.

Rough stone steps lead up to the heavy, iron-bound door, creviced and parched with age and opened by the manipulation of an enormous key in a still more enormous look. From the parapeted top of the turret is a far view of the barracks, Ghardaïa, Melika, and Bu Nura, the wadi and the desert. There is a cemetery near the tower and just outside the wall, while on the other side are the whitewashed buildings of Banú Isguen, clinging to the steep slope of the hill. Though it was already late in the afternoon by the time we reached the tower, and mauve-blue shadows were filling the narrow little chasms of the streets, the buildings themselves still shone with an even clearer, subtler blue, so intensely did they gleam in the sun's unclouded downpour. But the old tower was rough and ruddy and unreflecting; the heavy limestone blocks incasing the palm-trunk framework had been left unwhitened, and were still as grimly red as the desert cliffs from which they had been taken. It was as though untouched, once it had been completed by other hands than those of the builders of the city.

A very long time ago, it is said, when Banú Isguen was much smaller than it is to-day, it was besieged by outnumbering enemies skilled in the ways of war. One night, when the town was on the verge of capture and the peaceful people were in despair, a mighty wind arose, making strange and fearsome sounds; and the enemies, blinded by dust, withdrew to whatsoever shelter they could find, and shuddered at the dread moaning of the wind. The townspeople shuddered likewise, praying with cold lips, but each shouted brave words to embolden his comrades, saying that the hoped-for deliverance had come, yet meanwhile fearing destruction; fearing even that the city would be hurled into the valley below, for such was the strength of the wind.

Then, above the many strange sounds,—the din and blare of the blast, the husky hullabaloo, the shrilling chortles and screams,—they heard a thudding on the city wall as of a mighty hand beating for admittance. But they could see no thing, for torches were snatched and snuffed out by a wind so thick with sand that it seemed curdled with unspent speed; and a great darkness, like unto no night seen before, had descended upon the town. With the coming of dawn, the storm abated, and they saw this providential tower standing even as it does to-day, as if a rock-reef of the desert had been torn up and broken off in red lumps and piled on end. When

the siege was renewed, and their enemies came upon this tower built by a miracle in a single night, their fierce courage, already tattered by the storm, gave way, and they were seized with a great fear. But the defenders, rejoicing in new strength, hurled destruction upon them from the turret's top, so driving them away from Banú Isguen forever.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Third City of the M'zab and a New Well

Melika, perched on a pinnacle of the plateau pointing a big nobby finger at Ghardaïa, is a little bit of a city, truly a citadel, an acropolis, looking down with elfin supercilia upraised at the metropolis of the M'zab, which—with all its closely circling, crowded buildings and hilltop mosque—can reach up only half so high. The third city has watched the fourth and fifth, Banú Isguen and Ghardaïa, denizen their respective monticles, grow and prosper, and all the while has kept its prim superiority, as of a Parthenon above a busy Saint Peter's.

A little embryo city, this, a museum specimen, though musty it is not; nor would it grant the point itself, for museums are vulgar, modern things, it thinks. First and last in the sun, it is,—pale, lemon-tinted in the morning early; rosy as it flushes in the sunshine last of all; a model of antiquity, prettily pinnacled just as the others used to be, but can never, never be again. So Melika has grown to a certain size, then stayed the same; old, yet always

THE VIADUCT

Ghardaïa and the barracks from Melika

very young. The mosque and houses are painted their sunniest white, but the wall has been left quite plain; and the viaduct, leading across the channel from Ghardaïa, goes to a little above mid-point of Melika's hill, and there leaves off abruptly. Any one who really wishes to go, may just as well climb the straggling path and walk around on the ledge beneath the wall, looking for a place to get in—for the two doors are on far sides, one one way and the other the other.

Such was my fancy of Melika, and I never thought of finding it out, until one day 'Abdu 'l-Qádir told of the new well—the second within the city walls—they had been digging there for a long time, and of how deep it was getting to be; and why didn't I go? Now, I had understood that the people of Melika, while they didn't actually forbid visitors, did not encourage them,—a very easily understood point of view, for the town is so small that to make it the object of an excursion is almost like going into a private home out of curiosity. But 'Abdu 'l-Qádir convinced me that, whereas the Melikans do not allow strangers to stay overnight,—as is also the case with other M'zabite cities,—they did not in the least object to a friendly visit so long as it was conducted with respect for the rules and regulations of the city. As for curiosity, he said, that is a quality common to most people: everybody knows about it

and likes it well enough in everybody else so long as it is kept completely and pleasantly disguised. All of which has the suasion of good theory and the assurance of sound experience.

We had crossed to Ghardaïa and were just leaving the south gate, when we heard a clamorous, wailing lamentation: Yusuf and 'Abdu 'l-Qádir, removing their caps, bowed their heads respectfully as the troublous cortège of a Jewish funeral passed before us. The white-shrouded corpse, bound to a board, was borne above the heads of two men, while the mourners followed, beating upon their chests and ululating loudly. Then we continued on our way, wading ankle-deep through *safrá* sand. While crossing the viaduct, we encountered a number of Melikans driving donkeys, and were greeted courteously but very solemnly. Indeed, had it not been for the view from the viaduct, the little trip might have acquired a rather somber aspect. To the right, along the channel, were palm-clustered villas, many wells, gardens of vegetables and grains. The gardens, boxed in by ridges of earth, looked like bright-green muslin cross-barred with brown.

Scrambling up the little path, over and around huge crumbly rocks, we took the left turn along the ledge by the city wall. No sooner had I forgotten the funeral and the solemn-faced Melikans we had met, than we turned a corner and came in sight

of the cemetery of Melika—a wind-swept, desolate field without a blade of green, where irregularly scattered bits of pottery, mostly broken, marked formless, reddish-yellow mounds baking in the sun. A grimmer graveyard could never be imagined; but the pottery itself suggested a not unpleasant thought —the simplest sort of earthenware, yet modeled so distinctively by each family that it served to identify the graves.

'Abdu 'l-Qádir pushed open a heavy ancient door in the wall; and as we entered, a Melikan introduced himself as one of the guardians of the city. He asked with friendly forbearance if we had come on a visit, then, without further remarks, started off toward the central square as our official leader, brandishing the staff he carried and uttering sharp commands as he shooed all the women and children from the streets. There were but few men in the little square,—where very little marketing or any other earthly activity ever goes on,—and they appeared to be deep in serious discussion. To one side is the mosque, virtually on the same level as the other buildings; two of its pinnacles are topped by shining ornamental globes of silvery glass, but in other respects it is similar to the mosque of Ghardaïa.

The Ibádites do not tolerate the use of tobacco or intoxicants, adhere to the utmost simplicity in dress, and forswear all vanity, frivolity, and laxity of any

kind. Their prejudice against strangers' remaining within their cities is simply a defensive measure: they believe that their way of living is the best way, and they know that the admission of people of other beliefs into one of their communities would necessarily result in a change. They are very adverse to warfare and refuse to engage in it if there be any honorable alternative. This principle has been respected by the French, who have conceded them freedom from conscription in order to secure their allegiance. The religious rites of the M'zabites differ from those of any strict Muslim chiefly in the matter of pilgrimage; because of their early isolation, they do not join in the Hajj, but instead make pilgrimage to the tomb of their last imám, Ya'qúb. However, they still regard the Ka'ba at Mecca as the spiritual center toward which they address their prayers, although they have, in addition, another mihrab in each mosque, toward the tomb of Ya'qúb.

The quiet little city was absolutely spotless; for each town has a general cleaning day once a week, and the streets of Melika had just been swept. Abruptly the friendly town guardian halted, regarding me intently. I supposed that I was guilty of a commission or omission of some sort, but having done nothing but follow decorously in his footsteps, I began to review even my thoughts for something to apologize about. Before I had committed myself,

however, he asked in very solemn tones, his stern eyes unwavering, if I should like to see the second well within the city walls, which was still being dug. I looked at Yusuf and 'Abdu 'l-Qádir for a cue, but they too were solemnly reserved. Falteringly I said yes, whereupon, much to my relief, the guardian wheeled about and started off in exactly the same direction as before, but with an air of greater consequence in his strides.

Shortly we came to a break in a solid row of houses, and he very proudly escorted us behind a screen of rough boards, to the well. The workmen were clad in tunics, having discarded their cloaks; some took turns at the bottom of the well, working two at a time, while the others pulled on the cross-sticks of an exceedingly long rope by which the bucket and the diggers were lowered or raised. The rope, of M'zabite making, passed over a cross-bar above the well, and was pulled around several corners of the crooked little streets; but to prevent its being cut on the rough edges, poles turning in sockets had been affixed to the corners. After three years of digging down three hundred feet from a hilltop, through almost solid rock, the fragments pulled up in the bucket were only now becoming moist.

Such was the digging of the second well within the city walls. Every citizen was justly proud of the

achievement, and had very likely had his share in it —a very difficult achievement by a primitive method. But the method was simple, and simplicity bespeaks content. One of the workers, resting from his turn in the well, sent for coffee, and it was brought in an earthen jug. We all drank from the same metal cup: handed to me first, it was passed to each of the others, and when it was offered to me again, the ceremony was complete; meanwhile the jug had been lowered to the men in the well. Emboldened by this friendly spirit, I presumed to ask a kindly old patriarch, who appeared to be the presiding officer, if a picture might be taken of the men pulling the rope. For a few moments he regarded me thoughtfully, stroking his beard with a slim, wrinkled hand; then, seemingly satisfied that my intentions at least were good, he granted permission.

After expressing appreciation, I stationed Yusuf, with the camera, near a sunny corner where the men would pass, then waited with 'Abdu 'l-Qádir farther along down the street. Some moments passed before the opportunity came to take the picture, and so we sat down on a narrow projecting ledge along the wall of houses. Directly across from us was a most fascinating old door of great hand-hewn boards thickly studded with nails, and on the door-sill was an earthen jug.

I was eager to procure one for myself, and decided

that I should try to get a jug of the same kind in the market of Ghardaïa. Many of the M'zabites have the name of "Fakhar," the Arabic for "Potter," but most of the pottery is made near Melika. While similar work is done in several other parts of Algeria, the fact that the Melikan designs are recognizable as belonging to individual families gives their jugs an unusual attractiveness. Simple unglazed earthenware they are, but each piece is singularly decorative and expressive.

The old nail-studded door suddenly opened just a wee crack, and much excited whispering was heard; then several children peeped out. In a few moments the door opened a little wider, and this time one intrepid little girl, holding the tip of a little red tongue tightly between two rows of shiny teeth, squeezed through and darted across to us, to peep at the side view of me. . . . Back again she scurried to shelter, like a frightened rabbit. Such a lot of chattering went on inside, but as nothing very dreadful happened, she made another bold dash, and with one tiny finger actually touched my shoe, then quickly jumped back, squealing in a panic at her own daring! And all the other children, watching with bated breath, broke into rapturous cries of approval at their companion's audacity.

As it happened, I was wearing brown gloves, and these evidently puzzled them very much: they

pointed and chattered and had a terrible time trying to decide whether my hands had naturally grown that way or not. All this time 'Abdu 'l-Qádir and I sat as still as possible, lest we frighten the youngsters away, for we were enjoying the excitement too. Now he very, very carefully removed one of my gloves, assuming an expression of deep concern, as if he were performing a very perilous operation indeed. The children gasped: was he pulling the skin off the strange lady? But when they saw that my hand was like anybody else's, they were very much delighted; and I was very much delighted with them, for they looked and acted and carried on just like children everywhere. After all, despite differences in customs and language, even grown-ups can't be so very different from one another, fundamentally, so long as they were children once upon a time.

Meanwhile the town guardian had appeared around the corner, and the children, catching sight of him, vanished with a mighty slam of the door. Nevertheless he shouted, brandished his stick, and scowled—as is the business of gendarmery in general, for youngsters usually prefer a sworn enemy to a kindly benefactor, and the policeman *must* play the rôle accordingly. The guardian of Melika's public peace, having been thus properly foiled, took it upon himself to keep a glowering, spiteful eye on

A WELL IN THE WADI M'ZAB

Yusuf, to see that he took the one allotted picture and no more. The redoubtable photographer, bland as ever, smiled engagingly, as if taking pictures were really the best sport in the world and nothing could be more appreciated than an intelligent spectator. Then the workmen pulling the rope rounded the corner, and the beau ideal of all policemen was able to relax his lowering brows for an instant while Yusuf turned to take the snap-shot.

Watching the men plodding past,—silent, grave, yet, I venture, inwardly rejoicing in their good work, —gave a very keen sense of the character of the race. They are like prospectors for water in the desert; water of greater worth, though less highly priced, than gold. When dissensions of one sort or another occur within a city, the result is not bloodshed nor petty strife, nor scarcely even rivalry: if the dissenters do not see their way clearly to agreement, they depart to build a new city, to dig other wells. Sometimes the M'zabites buy up new lands, as in the neighborhood of Sedrata's ruins; often they pay from wealth gained largely on the spot. And in the M'zab they have made a good deal out of next to nothing.

Nor are they ever subservient, despite their love of peace. Nor do they seek the plaudits of others: many strangers, going to their country, learn only of their reticence. As I watched the workers, I noticed

particularly the second from the lead, an old man, white-bearded, paler of countenance than the others, yet strong. He seemed to put into the pulling on the rope an even more resolute and joyous strength than they, holding his head high, as if proud of having lived to take an able part in the digging of the new well. But he would not see the task completed, for I noticed, too, that he was blind.

CHAPTER TWENTY

An Earthen Jug and the Voice of the Wind

It was late in the afternoon, my last afternoon in the M'zab. The merchants still waited in their little shops around the market of Ghardaïa; a few were putting away their wares for the evening; fewer still made final flourishes for a tardy purchaser or two straying by depleted stalls or bickering for a bargain. The square itself was empty; it looked larger than before, as it sagged a little toward the shadows slanting ever farther from the westward wall. The Prayer Stone, too, looked larger—tall-bodied, angled, argent, lodged on this worn shield of weathered or. Heraldic it was, of the Málikite* traders who had departed until another day; heraldic, rather, of this division of Islám—for there have been a number of divisions, as of Christianity. For just as the M'zab is an island of fundamental orthodoxy in the majority-rule "orthodoxy" of North Africa,

* The Málikites, the majority of Muslims in North Africa, are a branch of Sunnís, the majority of Muslims in general and therefore the orthodox; the most popular heterodoxy is that of the Shi'ites, most numerous in Persia.

this Prayer Stone—or *Msolla* as it is called—is a little unenterable island mosque for the Málikites who visit the capital of the M'zab.

The big island of Africa, the oasis islands of the inland Saharan sea, the doctrinal island of the Shabka with its island cities, and still smaller doctrinal islands within the cities . . . There are other islands: the Jewish quarter at Ghardaïa, the small Arab settlement on the opposite side of the hill, the barracks, the establishments of Les Pères Blancs and Les Sœurs Blanches. . . .

Occasionally one of the missionaries is seen in the market square; their habit is a reminder of the Prophet's saying, "Wear white garments, for verily they are full of cleanliness, and pleasant to the eye," a saying observed by Muslims, who regard purity of wool as the other requisite for pious attire. It is curious, too, that these two groups of islanders, Les Missionaires and the M'zabites, retain the flowing garb original in the peninsula, Arabia. The Greek chiton—from which came the Roman tunic and many vestments of the church—was derived from the robes of ancient Arabia; the word "chiton" was similarly derived. So the costly raiment of prince and pontiff, majestic and free-flowing from the shoulder, harks back to the primitive attire of a desert peninsula, as does also the simple, unassuming garb of priest and

M'zabite in the Shabka, the little island civilization of the Sáhara.

And on this my last afternoon in the M'zab, I too was the center of an island, a moving island of M'zabite merchants, making the circuit of the deserted market. As I went from one little shop to the next, some of the merchants would leave the group, while others would join; they were showing me earthen jugs,—or showing them to Yusuf, who was with me,—but none of the jugs was of the design I had admired in Melika. Nor did we find that kind after visiting every cubbyhole in es-suk. It was getting late; and I was disappointed.

Suddenly the little crowd about us dispersed, and a young M'zabite, of more commanding and aristocratic appearance than the merchants, stepped before me. Bowing low with a wide-spread swirl of snowy robes, he said in respectful tones and formal phraseology:

"Yahyá, Caid of Ghardaïa, requests that Madame accompany me to the Executive Chambers."

We followed him across the market square. In the doorway of the administration building the caïd stood waiting, a majestic man—grave dark eyes; pale face, a thoughtful and ascetic face. We entered his little study and were seated. After giving an order for refreshments, he began conversing in a very

pleasant, informal manner, as though picking up the thread of some previous discussion we might have had.

The room was very small, a sort of study and office combined, dimly lighted through the open doorway and one little window high up in the wall. There were many shelves filled with books and manuscripts; at a table, a secretary was studiously writing an easy flow of Arabic on a very long scroll. Now and then he would cut off a sheet, hand it to his master for approval, and then affix the caïd's seal. There was an air of perfect composure about it all; my host made no effort to develop artificial topics, as one often does with a stranger, asking questions first and then manufacturing answers into newly worded but pointless remarks. So it was left for me to feel that I was at home in the little room; that I knew, perhaps, the ins and outs of the affairs of administration. But I did not know why there was a certain sadness to the affairs that day.

The caïd spoke of the little study, saying that there he felt he lived with his people more closely than when he walked among them or talked with one of them alone, for he could hear their composite voice as they carried on their business in the square, and so learn to understand them better, that he might help them as he should. Some while later I was to encounter two young citizens of Ghardaïa in Algiers;

hearing that I had met the caïd, they could not find words to praise him as they would, nor could contain their pride in their beloved ruler. He was indeed a man to be remembered. . . .

The scribe wrote steadily on the long scroll; the letters all looked very much the same, like copies of some original the caïd might have written himself, but he read each carefully before handing it back. And during these frequent silences his personality seemed more palpably to pervade the room; a singularly strong personality, reticent, and singularly kind. Returning from the mosque, he had noticed me, he said, staying late in the market, apparently in futile search for something; perhaps he would know how it might be found. . . .

I told him of the jug I admired, made by one of the Fakhars of Melika, and the caïd nodded, as though recalling that very one; then, walking to the doorway, he clapped his hands. A score or more white-robed figures materialized out of the dusk, and subsided in billowing baránis before him, awaiting his command, their faces hidden in outstretched arms. After he had given his instructions, they arose, and there was some negative wagging of heads; but he repeated a few words firmly and the men vanished in the gathering shadows, like phantoms.

The caïd asked if, while waiting, I should like to

see the council hall upstairs. It is a lofty, spacious room, occupying the entire front of the building; a pale light from the evening sky shone softly through tall windows upon the rug-strewn open floor. Against the walls were cushioned divans, before them a few taborets, and at one end of the room, the black mouth of a fireplace. From one of the windows we looked out upon the empty arena of the square; a vague and shadowy arena where but a single lamp burned steadily: on the Prayer Stone's monumental little "lighthouse"—the *nar* had been lit in the minaret.

It was quite dark when we returned downstairs, and a servant was just placing a lighted candle in a sconce on the wall above the scribe's table. We were served with dates and sweet black coffee. . . . There was a sense of timeless repose in the little study, like a benediction, like a quiet, quieting hand upon the shoulder. . . . The caïd sat straight, pensive and detached. . . . And, in the uncertain glow of the candle, the scribe still wrote on, as if recording the solemn thoughts of his motionless master, or some serene phantasy of his own. Silently, but for rustling parchment and scratching rosewood pen, he labored beneath the nimbus of the candle's tiny flame, like a chronicler of long moments, peacefully empty moments, with now and then an undertone of expectancy. Here were the table and the

THE PRAYER STONE

Angled, argent, lodged on this worn shield of weathered or

pen, symbols of *Qismat*, the lot of each and every one.

As though newly mindful of my presence, the Caïd Yahyá stirred slightly, and said:

"My heart is sad, madam; I reflect upon the brevity of a good life, a life that has reached the limit of its earthly path, and now rests through a long night until the Reckoning, having followed the Word of Alláh an-Núr. On this day have I lost a wise friend, an uncle very dear to me." The letters were announcements of the death.

In a few moments several couriers returned, bringing various kinds of jugs, but none of the design I had hoped for; I would willingly have taken one, however, had not the caïd dispatched the men to search again. Then, to my dismay, I learned that all the family who made that type of jug were dead! But the caïd assured me that there must be plenty of the jugs still to be had, and said that it was not amiss to admire a craftsmanship lost with the passing of this family, for no more fitting tribute could be paid them.

At last a man brought two of the precise design—one stained from long usage, worn smooth and gray, like a twilight desert; the other had been kept unused, with the soft fresh texture of new-baked earth, and rose-tinted, like the desert at dawn. I hesitated, trying to decide which they would prefer me to

choose; the caïd smiled understandingly, and handed me both. There was nothing I could say . . . such a simple gift, given in a simple, friendly way. I was grateful that I had sought to find that day an earthen jug for memory's sake, and had found far more.

Clustered on the bosom of the desert like miniatures carved of alabaster, the cities of the Shabka feel the ebb and flow of its breathing, the incessant caresses of the wind, restless, drifting, as if sublimated from the rocks and sand by the sun's relentless flame. This is the thought of the desert that speeds across its slumbering form, uniting each ridge, each sandy lake, each slowly writhing dune into one vast consciousness. This is the song of the desert that wafts away the music of its people. This is the voice of the desert that tells of its unimaginable soul. To those who have for some dire reason sought a refuge here, the desert first has said: Ye shall not live; ye shall be driven unto madness. There is no end, there is no turning back. . . . And then, to those who had outlasted fear, the desert spoke again: Ye have survived; strive on! More ghostly treasures than imagined ye shall find. The barrier is passed; now comes strength, and to life a newer meaning. Ye have forgone your former world, but clearer beau-

ties still will be discovered, and knowledge of what ye could not know before. What has been lost, ye shall regain, and more: view all things in their true worth, and take the gift of freedom for yours, for aye. . . . Yet, the seven cities, despite their centuries, despite their man-made sturdiness, seem but pretty artifices on the desert's sandy robe. A thousand years of bravery and toil have built these shining citadels; yet, in the restless current of the wind, each gleams like the light of a single day in a timeless everlasting.

The desert wind is a thing of magic, of ever changing form. At times it is a nervous little sprite, ferreting across a maze directionless and barren; again, a smooth river floating sunnily along with the even ease of existence adrift; or, fraught with moody malice from this eventless flight, it claws and mangles at the desert with tidal, hurtling sweep.

Often, of a night, I would lie wakeful, listening to the crooning wind. Then it might be a limitless, unimpeded movement, the mighty beat of phenix wings: now with the measured stroke of steady flight, now hovering, brooding, only to pass on like destiny fulfilled. But as my thoughts became more dream-like, I could hear, in the lull and hush of the wind, the spirit waves, the storms and gales and rain of an unseen sea—there was such a boundless, rushing flood and flow. Perhaps, in an age long ago, the

desert was this sea. Then a pretty country-side. But hungry winds had swept across it, leaving, perchance, a few salt cliffs, a few clouds, and then . . . nothing more but the desert and the wind.

At last I would fall asleep, but waken to hear an awesome sound like the distant thundering hoof-beats of a mighty cavalcade. Was this another mood of the wind, or indeed a vengeful Nemesis arising with the warriors of a race now overcast? Where now a memory of their fertile land which might once have lain here? In the wind, sighing, sobbing, did I hear the moans of a buried people? Was that pulsing hum a token of the once free coursing of their blood? I would lie still, intently listening, imagining now the run and dance of footsteps, the distant lowing of cattle from green pastures, the note of a hunter's horn from hillsides far away. Again, I felt I could detect, in the rhythm and sweep of the wind, the reedy pipes of these lost imaginary people, or a fuller music swelling to a hymn in chorus like the intonations of an organ. . . . sinking then to a mournful dirge, or to the whispering verse of folk-song and lullaby. But only the wind would rise again, a voiceless breath, speeding this all away to some far haven of human hopes. Such is the strength of the wind—laying veil upon veil of rustling sand, covering cities and civilizations with naught but dust, and ancient, hidden glory.

Pale stars would wait upon the day, and day would dawn, the wind still droning on into unbounded endlessness. And thousand-league shadows would fast unfold, with color come from the sky, gold-plumed with desert clouds. Morning light would spread like a mesh of gossamer silk over brilliant fields of flowers, as though by alchemy the sun and wind preserved the petal-tints of a once luxuriant country-side. But in the full reality of day, where was a trace of this time-forgotten, visional land? An eddying spiral of fine sand for a peaceful curl of smoke . . . Formless mounds in mockery of palaces and pavilions . . . A mystery unearthed, but buried again in undulating variations of monotony . . . Now there was only the wind, sifting desert sands with mighty gesture . . . sowing, reaping, harvesting, in proud display of power and mimicry of men's toil. Nor, as the victoring sun rose high, could I see a vestige of my vanished people, save a glinting in the sand, as of their brass and gold; I could hear no whisper of them, above the droning of the wind.

This is the spell of the desert wind, so distant, so near, permeant, far-reaching to everywhere; now like blasts from a furnace, now cooling, comforting, refreshing. It is toneless, yet with a soul of euphony, telling ever of an Elysium, an apotheosis of desire. A low, melodious chant or deeper cadence,

commanding, impelling . . . Protecting, yet destroying; at once preserving and drying, and all-absorbing . . . Its song can never be forgotten, nor its call, once heard, unheeded. And when I said good-by to my new friends, to white Ghardaïa smiling bravely up to the clear blue sky, I wondered how much I had left behind, how much would be with me forever.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A Falcon Chase

It was yet a good hour before daylight when I was awakened by a suppressed bustling about the barracks; several of the officers were leaving for El Golea. When I went out into the court, I found Yusuf already astir, and his automobile beside the entrance: we too had planned an early start, to keep the appointment with the bachagha for a falcon chase, and, after a hasty breakfast, took our leave. Stars still sparkled in the soft dark sky; Ghardaïa was a pale-gray pyramid, and its minaret with lofty gesture seemed to mark the Galaxy of misty light trailed across the desert sky.

Beyond the valley's eastern wall, a fleeting streak of silver heralded the day; but morning's star gleamed undimmed until the sun shot forth a flight of fiery arrows, and rose to light a desert glittering with dew, on sand and rocks and brittle halfa-grass. Our road was the same we had taken on the journey to the Shabka from El Aghuat, and again we were companioned by the single telegraph wire and the

worn caravan trail. Along this curving groove now marched a caravan in straggling file, to arrive in good time for trading in the M'zab.

Shortly before reaching Berrian, we came upon a smaller caravan, halted near the trail: men, women, children, bedraggled by the wind; camels, goats, donkeys, sheep, in stranded groups. A poignant ceremony was taking place: a grave had been dug in the barren rocky soil; a shrouded form was gently lowered, laid on its side, the face toward the sun and the *qiblah* of Mecca; near by, the women huddled desolately together, weeping. . . .

The trip lacked other notable event, save seeing a very dark guepard which looked nearly black in the distance. With a lash of white-tipped tail, it bounded away out of sight, more than pantherish in speed. . . . From the tops of undulations, the white-walled caravansary could be seen, still many leagues away. . . . We had been sighted, too, for when we arrived, the Bachagha Dailis ibn Jellúl met us just outside the gate, and smilingly showed me first of all into the roofless kitchen, as is the custom of the Arab host, to let the guest witness preparation in his honor.

Over a glowing bed of coals, a whole lamb was being turned and turned upon a spit, by two bronzed, happy-faced Arabs, while a third basted the roast with melted butter from a bowl-sized ladle in which he also caught the dripping fat. The *meshwi* was

BEFORE THE HUNT

The Bachagha and his chef at the caravansary at Tilghrempt

fast attaining a tempting golden brown. Puffy loaves of unleavened bread, hot from the oven, were broken open, buttered, and piled on a big silver plate; and the air was redolent of steam rising from an enormous pot of kus-kus above another fire, especially prepared from gazelle meat, chicken, granules made from barley and wheat, all spiced with many herbs.

Every one looked very much delighted at the prospect of this festive fare. The beaming chef tramped proudly between his two fires and, wearing a remnant uniform but no cloak, revealed at least some of the secret of the Arab's haughty stride, as if with each step he repeated to himself, "I will, by God, walk to that place, and then, by God, to the next!" A full array of dogs waited near the kitchen door, each joyfully wagging a tail aloft, while, in a farther circle, chickens slumberously sunned themselves, or strutted decorously in the offing, but ever with beady, greedy eyes upon the door.

While waiting, we walked about the caravansary, stopping at the well where men are busy all day long drawing water for the bachagha's flocks and herds, and where passing caravans stop to replenish their supply. By the time we returned, the first course was already served, and the dining-room table gleamed with silver, glass, and snowy linen. Among the hors-d'œuvres, numerous and appetizing, was a particularly delicious patty of gazelle livers. Other

courses followed, including one of the chef's far-famed omelets, and then . . .

The curtains at the door were swept aside with a great flourish and held by one of the attendants, while the chef himself entered, radiating triumph and bearing aloft with both hands a huge deep silver platter on which rested the meshwi. He had never tramped more nobly, nor crinkled up his face with more of his come-and-go grins; and he made no secret of his pride in the savory masterpiece as he placed it exactly in the middle of the table between the bachagha and me, then solemnly anointed the meshwi with a final flood of honey-colored gravy.

With the thumb and forefingers of his right hand, my host deftly extracted the kidneys, the choice portion, and placed them on my plate, then we both reached out to pluck delicious morsels from the roast. What a crispy, tasty, juicy golden prize! Our tribute was only mortal. But about the time I began to feel I could not eat another bite, I was aghast to see the table cleared and arranged for another course—the kus-kus, with more hot buttered bread. These in turn were replaced by *sharbat* (cool fruit juices; literally, a "drink") and an assortment of little cakes, nuts, honey, dates, and other fresh fruits. . . . And at last I for one felt I should never rise again,—from the table,—while any thought of a falcon chase was too absurd. But as we lingered

over coffee and cigarettes, I lost this feeling of the contented constrictor.

Before leaving for the chase, I was shown to a room where were laid out very voluminous Zouave trousers, gold-embroidered red boots, burnús, and the rest of the accoutrements for me to wear. Thus equipped, I rejoined the bachagha, and Yusuf drove us out near the hunting-ground—a trip of an hour or so. The sandy soil was strewn with pebbles, rocks, desert grass, and occasional thorny thickets along tortuous ravines; a land of constant struggle to which the sun-scorched, yellowed vegetation well attested.

Beside the road the falconers and beaters were waiting with our mounts, handsome Arabian horses like "the snorting chargers . . . those who strike fire with their hoofs . . and raise up dust" described in the hundredth chapter of the Qur'án, the "Súra of the Chargers." The chief falconer, M'hommed, carried four hooded falcons,—upon his gauntleted right wrist and upon his shoulders and head,—while a couple of other falconers each carried two or three in like manner. M'hommed was very much of an old hawk, himself, a real hunter—tall and sinewy, with wrinkled leather-brown skin, bony aquiline features, straight black bristling brows, and black eyes gleaming red through narrowed lids. The other men were scarcely less picturesque.

I soon got on friendly terms with the little gray

stallion I rode: having some difficulty at first in making him obey my wishes, I fortunately happened to lean forward to stroke his ears, and found that by this caress he could be made to do almost anything. The bachagha's horse was a magnificent lustrous-eyed creature, quivering at being held in check. He pawed at the air with one hoof as though he would climb up if he could not gallop ahead—like his legendary forebear created from a handful of the south wind. And, like nearly every Arabian horse, he had a way of arching his neck and flaring his tail, as proud as a peacock.

All the mounts were splendidly caparisoned,—bridles, stirrups, trappings, high-backed red saddles, worked with silver and gold,—and those of the bachagha's were particularly finely made. Dailis himself, in baránis of white and blue, a guepard skin under his saddle, hooded gray falcons on head and wrist, made a very impressive and memorable figure.

In full regalia, yet untarnished by the hunt, we drew up in the most glorious array we could muster: the bachagha, myself, and M'hommed, looking his wickedest, in the center, the other horsemen and falconers flanking each side, with beaters and falcons distributed as effectively as possible . . . and Yusuf, as skilled mechanic, master chauffeur, linguist, anthropologist, and arch-photographer, took

Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

FALCON CHASE

Eugène Fromentin, Algeria, 1863

our picture—single-handed and impervious to my suggestions about getting us all "in," arranging the horizon horizontally, and other helpful hints.

He took our picture repeatedly, with all the combinations, variations, and permutations that he mathematically considered worthy of us and tributes to his sense of artistic composition. After the hunt had reached climax and conclusion, and it was too dark to photograph any more, Yusuf discovered, with the same consummate skill, that he himself had lost the lens from the camera. Despite all the wiles of Algerian chemists, the "pictures" subsequently showed only a remarkably pristine preservation from proper exposure in the desert—save only one, taken upon our arrival at the caravansary.

But, happily, the loss of the lens, particularly while the loss was yet unknown, did not affect our enjoyment of the chase. The beaters, deployed in fan formation, spread out, flaying the thickets with long sticks, while the rest of us followed similar tactics on our own, each riding past likely clumps of brush. Suddenly a beater jumped a hare, and screamed—a wild, exultant scream like the shriek of an ungodly afreet, more quickly vibrant than a death-rattle, more chilling and terrifying. Every one took up the cry, a tally-ho with a vengeance, enough to make the most bedeviled harpy hide head under wing and shiver. But the falcons

themselves were by now out of hearing: their hoods snatched off, they had been thrown into the air, and up they shot like swerving arrows, spiraling, leaping as if their curving pointed wings caught solidly in the air with each flashing stroke, springing them ever aloft. . . .

I too felt I was flying. . . . The beaters had long since been left behind. I had been farthest from the started quarry; the screaming cavalry was charging on far ahead, baránis stripping out madly in the wind. I caught a twitch of my horse's ears as he cupped them forward, then, with an answering scream, laid them flat on his head, took the bit in his teeth, stretched out, and streaked across the tousled, tawny, rifted desert like a demon. But I was watching nothing but the falcons; my horse was, too, perhaps. I felt I was flying. . . . I felt my horse lift from the ground. . . . I knew I was flying, soaring. . . . Upward. . . . Downward!

We landed at the bottom of a gully.

We stayed perfectly still at first, thinking things over. Then he turned his slim little ears back, like two shapely, pointed exclamation marks. "Are you there?!" I was all there, very much there: the high-backed saddle, reaching above the small of my back, felt like a giant duck's bill holding me gently, and I, the unhappy frog, did not know whether to jump or wait for something providential to happen.

Since the horse, in rolling a little on his side when he fell, had pinned my leg beneath him, I decided to wait. I reached forward and stroked his ears. At this he perked them up sharper still,—exclamation marks to the front, "I wonder what became of all of all those pretty falcons!"—carefully shifted off my leg, scrambled up, and started off down the gully, whisking his tail as though to brush off the signs of our ignominious descent. I stood up in the stirrups, yet could not see over the walls of this treacherously receptive little ravine; but the horse saw a less steeply shelving place on one side, rushed at it, clambered out, and galloped off after the others with a squeal of joy, like Lucifer redeemed.

On the field of glory we found the bachagha, M'hommed, and the rest, waiting patiently for me to appear. Even the beaters had assembled; the falcons were again hooded and peacefully perched on the falconers; the hare, duly slain, hung from M'hommed's saddle. The bachagha waved a welcome and, seeing that I was evidently hale and hearty and that the horse still had four useful legs, thoughtfully omitted any inquisition. But Lucifer, at least, was not crestfallen; no, indeed! He pranced up to his comrades, shaking his mane, as if he had just dashed off on a wild-rabbit chase all of his own and had the most amazing adventures, though the wild rabbit had escaped, by some miracle.

From then on I participated in the full gamut of excitement, for my horse kept in the thick of the fray and, with more consideration for terrestrial support, watched his step. The falcons were marvels at the game: off they'd go with a *swish*, and in no time were up in the sky, a moment soaring . . . till one would sight the prey, fold her wings, and drop, the others swooping after her. And one hunch-shouldered hawk, shaped like a fuselage as she perched long-clawed on M'hommed's head, was particularly adept. She had a trick of shooting up instinctively to the right spot, where, not soaring, but banking spread wings perpendicularly, she would come about with a dizzy, silvery flash, jack-knife, and drop like a guillotine. If the hare could get under thick enough brush in time, he was safe; otherwise he was killed instantly. There was no alternative; and, to make doubly sure, a second falcon usually struck after the first had jumped away with a flare of wings.

In all, we bagged four hares; from the last, M'hommed fed a bit of the fresh meat to each of the falcons. As they lighted on the ground about him, he gave a peculiar whistle, and they marched toward him, swaying like jolly tars, to gobble their "sugar-plums"; the long, shining, sickle-talons spread, half sinking into sand. Discovering one hawk missing, we scanned the sky for the truant, soon sighted by the

keen-eyed M'hommed—a tiny black pirate sloop, lateen-winged, sailing serenely in the orange sea of sunset, bound to get something, if she had to fly all night.

He walked a little way from us and gave a long, shrill call, half whistle, half eerie cry—seemingly useless for such a distance. But the falcon came about with full-sail majesty, swinging swiftly in a great arc, as if suspended; soared back, sinking . . . sinking . . . and slid down out of the sky. Surely she would dash her brains out! Then, a fourth-dimension parabola as of a comet on curved wings, a final flurry, and she lighted with a snap and crackle of sheaving quills. Accepting a tidbit as a snapdragon really should, she cordially swiveled her head with gimlet eyes full at M'hommed's face—"So you're still here, are you?"—and calmly "took the veil," a gay-tufted leathern hood.

As we loped back toward the motor-car, the chill wind blew apace across the desert; a drear gray desert now, where dry grasses forlornly waved and sighed in the wind, "Ah, me!" We found Yusuf somewhat forlorn and no doubt sighing, "Ah, me!" too, for he had just discovered the loss of the lens. He looked as if contemplating a night in the desert alone, as retribution, but learning that this was not to be, cheered up. On the way to El Aghuat, I asked the bachagha if it were true, as I had heard, that a

law was being considered to prohibit the falcon chase. He could not say for certain, venturing that a good many laws were being and had been considered; nor could he suggest any reason for abolishing a princely sport which has been enjoyed in the East for four thousand years.

The ancient Latins probably named the falcon from *falx*, a scythe or sickle, which its talons resemble; and truly it is a scythe of certain death, like that similarly named blade of bygone warriors, the falchion. But the Arab name, *soqr*,—literally "sacred,"—better suggests the mystic frenzy of the falcon chase; for to this there is a more subtle zest than to other forms of hunting—a primitively religious rite, perhaps, in which the falcon is symbol of freedom, and symbol of that questing, predacious instinct which makes man more than gregarious.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Bachagha's Farewell Entertainment

THE evening after the falcon chase, I left the hotel with Yusuf and the courier sent to conduct me to the bachagha's home in El Aghuat for a farewell entertainment. In the serene light of the moon, the sand of the market street shone like powdered glass; the town was radiant, peaceful, and quiet save for contented groans of camels and muted human sighs from the blue shadow of a wall, where caravans rested. One wayfaring band, a *qáfila* from the south, followed a donkey's tinkling bell up the street, where the sand cupped soft hands under tread of feet, and so seemed to know and breathe each name in passing. . . . Tall palms were stenciled black against the starry sky, and in a pathwayed park the bachagha came to meet me; his snowy hlafa and silver-broidered cloak of soft pale blue were like charm and counter-charm, like moon-white night and desert shadow.

In the little garden court of the bachagha's home, we stopped for a while by the fountain to talk, for

he was in a more reflective mood than I had found him before. Mellow lamplight streamed through a doorway, and from the room beyond came the sound of voices as Yusuf entered and was greeted. A Nubian slave stood white-robed and glistening black beside the door, and a tiny gazelle, lying near a flower-bordered wall, waked to gaze with great soft eyes, then laid its head back on its flank and went to sleep again.

We spoke of many things: of a journey by caravan I contemplated, the bachagha telling with some detail what conditions and experiences would likely be encountered . . . Of the content which such a night as this must bring to the people of many towns, and caravan encampments, and to nomads tented on the desert far from any trail. How could one envy another? The oasis surpassed all else for those who tarried there; yet the horseman or caravaneer or nomad, at his camp-fire, could not ask for more than the open desert in this cool tide of light.

From the open doorway now came the soft music of *al'úd*, the lute, and when we went in, we found Yusuf teaching the entertainers a musical game he had learned from the Kabyles.

"A Kabyle game!" said the bachagha. "Well, we should certainly learn about it too."

The long room was of restful simplicity charac-

OASIS GATEWAY

The gates of some are always open, the gates of others always closed for the night

teristic of desert people, and ornamented only by the needed furnishings; we sat on cushioned divans around a brass tray-table exquisitely inlaid with copper and silver; and the bare white walls becomingly accented the bright colors worn by two girls, a singer and a dancer, and the flowing lines of the musicians' robes. The Nubian *'abd* stood guard at the door, and the dancer, assuming the duties of hostess while the others played and sang, served cool green sharbat aromatic of mint in crystal goblets.

Each of the entertainers was interestingly unusual (the bachagha had evidently chosen them with great care), and at their hands Arab music became quite different from the ordinary minstrelsy of the dance-halls. The lutist, a tall slender young Arab, was singularly garbed in white turban and very closely fitting blue coat reaching to his ankles and buttoning up the front to a straight tight collar. His hands were extraordinarily flexible, and the quick grace of his tapering fingers, over lute or flute, was almost as enjoyable as the music so produced. But he had more the appearance of a student; an appearance undeniably confirmed by heavy, shell-rimmed spectacles!

The other musicians each played flutes of different lengths and drums of different tone and timbre, sometimes passing the drums from one to the other, for each had his own knack of rhythm

and resonance. Their repertory was inexhaustible: they played singly or in varied combinations, at times accompanying the girl singer or the lutist—who also had an exceptionally well-trained voice. He would strike a few chords on the lute and recite a legend of far places and strange events. Once he told of a pearl-diver, and made the lute to sound as clearly as a harp—liquid notes like little waves lapping at the prow of a boat. And when he sang of the desert, the dancer would take the part of a gazelle with the soul of a genie, or of the maiden who searched many days for her betrothed, and, weeping, dropped a tear upon a rock, which thereupon broke asunder to liberate him from a potent spell.

After one of these graceful pantomimes, the bachagha asked Yusuf to show us the game he had learned from the Kabyles. The spectacled Arab gave him the lute and offered to be "it." The task was to identify a certain chosen object—such as one of the goblets—or to find some small article hidden anywhere in the room or on the person of one of the other players. While he pointed long supple hands this way and that, he was guided in his quest by changing chords on the lute. At first he went to the other end of the room and turned his back while we decided what he should have to find, but the

bachagha, seeing an opportunity to make the game more impressive, said:

"No, I suspect he has keen ears, being a musician, and might overhear a whisper!"

So the spectacled one was banished from the room while the secret conference took place, and the Nubian 'abd was commanded to guard against eavesdropping—on pain of death, more or less.

It required considerable skill to interpret Yusuf's strumming, and most of the contestants had a hard time getting the right cue. But the lutist was invariably successful, apparently deriving as much advantage from his facile gestures as from his "keen ears"; and when he played the lute himself, Yusuf found the game he had introduced none too easy, for the rapid succession of chords, shading imperceptibly from one to the next, were quite intentionally confusing.

But no matter who played the lute or who was "it," the Nubian kept the secrecy of the conference inviolable. His procedure was most elaborate: flattening his back against the door,—as soon as "it" was out,—bracing himself as if to withstand a battering ram, pressing an ear to a panel, and rolling his eyes till the whites gleamed delightfully, perhaps perceiving some untoward movement of the one outside. At the given signal, he crouched a bit and,

soundlessly opening the door just a crack, peered through; fortunately, none of the players was ever caught spying. Having finally satisfied himself that everything was as it should be, he drew himself up to his full height, threw back his shoulders, swung the door open with a tremendous flourish, and glowered suspiciously at "it," as that innocent individual entered.

In any group of Arab musicians, there always seems to be at least one old man, a-pattering on a drum. And at the bachagha's entertainment there was one, a wrinkled gray old man in white, who kept the hood of his burnús peaked up over his hlafa. Hollow cheeks pocketed into his bony face or bulged out unevenly when he blew upon a flute, as if his mouth were full of marbles. A craftier wizard could never be found: as the flute would vanish under a fold of his robe and he took to raining fingers again on a drum between his skinny knees, his black eyes glimmered with secret schemes or darted canny glances about the room, for never a move of any one did he miss. Then quick as a wink he would catch another flute from the air, and flutter his cheeks once more. One of three it would be: a long ebony flute, or a reed flute medium-sized, or one of ivory, very small and banded with silver. But always he watched our every gesture, perhaps storing us up piecemeal in his mind . . . clothes, thoughts, finger-

tips, and all . . . till the time when he could go to some hidden retreat, draw us out—presto!—like flutes from the air, assemble us in every kind of curious way, and chortle at how funny and frail and foolish we were, and how much funnier still we could be made to be.

Now the bachagha noticed my interest in the wrinkled old man and bade him relate some of his adventures. But he slowly shook his head, as if not daring to tell what *he* knew, and offered instead to make solo music on the flute. In quick order the three flutes appeared, but the first only squeaked, the second one purred,—the more contented the harder he blew,—and the third made no sound, till at last, when his cheeks were nigh to bursting, it faintly gurgled and wheezed like a leaky hubble-bubble. The bachagha nodded as much as to say that such was the way with the best of flute-players; and now the wrinkled old man had the three flutes together like pipes-o'-Pan, and with scrambling fingers played a very short tune, yet so queer and droll that we found it the very best ever.

When the old man had displayed his trickster's trade and skill in music, he became very serious; for now all the musicians, as well as the dancer and the singer, made ready for the next part of the entertainment, and he too prepared to put his best flute forward. The lutist played a few soft chords, and

recited the prelude to a drama of desert life; a drama symbolizing the dominance of necessity over emotions, of reality over dreams—dominance but never destruction. . . . The ivory flute quavered and trilled, slowly growing clearer, sweeter, and from a great distance came the roll of drums. Such, perhaps, was the song of a happy people living in an oasis more beautiful than any other; and such was the drumming of the jinn in the vast desert about them.

Lifting its fountain of pleading, elusive music above the rumble of phantom drums, the flute played on—a crystal, bubbling stream of melody, gathering strength from all the lyric rivulets of the desert. It sang of an early morning dream, of the joyous phantasy of childhood and youth. The singer, sitting motionless, eyes closed, without gesture or facial expression, sang like a virtuoso's instrument; at first her voice rose softly, a little apprehensively, and then in soaring flight mingled with the liquid carol of the flute. The dancer's slim shimmering form, as though borne on a new inflection of the song, floated with effortless grace across the open floor, to fashion fresh rhythmic beauties in the modulating throb of music. Now a diaphanous whirling mist of green-and-gold draperies, now a tantalizing, alluring maiden, partly concealing her bewitching dark eyes, her entreating red lips, this flame-like vision danced on, till the song's summit of joy was reached—the joy

of a glad people, of a strong child, of a happy maiden.

But the stern march of the drums grew louder, more ominous of drought and storm and devastation. They induced a sadness in the purling notes of the flute, longing and fear in the woman's voice; they suddenly hushed . . . leaving only a vast emptiness and a muttering rumble of drums. Then they thundered, louder, swelling as if to burst the bounds of limitless space; song and flute grew fainter, feebler; the dancer's movements slowed, became submissive, mechanical, and she sank with a last gesture of renunciation in a crouching heap on the floor.

The flute faltered, the woman's voice broke in a throaty sob. Yet the drums thundered nearer, louder, more relentless. A man's voice, vibrant with sorrow, sang the message of the drums, of reality and necessity, commanding, indomitable. The drums again reverberated from afar, then swelled to a mighty hymn of triumph, crushing all else—all save a minor note of the flute, quavering anew with poignant sweetness. . . . This was indeed the drama of the desert, where always in a miraculous way distress and disaster are outlasted, and a sense of fine beauty survives.

There were other themes woven into textures of music, dance and song . . . then the musicians played a farewell song of the desert; and the Nubian

'abd lay with his face hidden in outflung arms while they sang: *"Ma 'assalama, wa 'udd ilaina saliman!"* ("Alláh's Peace be with you on your journey, but may you return again!") The little group personified the ancient customs of goodness and simplicity of desert people, the good wish behind their veils and flowing robes, the hospitality which the desert has engendered since the first withering away of the lands between oases. And I shall always remember the song of the flute—a crystal, bubbling melody ever rising anew.

Around each oasis town is a wall, with a gate of the east, and a gate of the west, and perhaps others; the gates of some are always open, the gates of others always closed for the night—open or closed to caravans which journey between the oases across the desert. Like these oasis towns are the people of the desert and the people of other lands: however close one is to his neighbor, to family or friends, however open-hearted to the stranger, open-handed to those in need, open-minded to the world at large and to the lives of its people, each one must always be separated from his fellows by the unalterable solitude between, must be walled off from this solitude and from other solitary beings by the barrier of his phys-

ical self. Yet there are gateways in this barrier, through which messages of sound and sight, word and deed and written thought may enter like caravans from another oasis in this universal desert. Some gates are ever eagerly open, others sometimes shut; some oases send forth many caravans laden with good things; and a few neither give nor receive, but view the desert as an empty place, or perhaps as a solitude all their own.

Yet each one who journeys through the desert, thinks to return, possibly not to the same oases, the same trails, but surely to the desert . . . thinks to linger in a moon-drenched garden where flowers ghostly glow . . . thinks to watch again the desert waken to the wonder of the night—a desert which will strengthen with the tide of many, many moons, will slowly spread, will haply in some distant age embrace the earth in one great desert like the moon. So each living thing must equally in the end return as dust to dust, to this desert reaching out; the winds will sift the dust and carry it along on many migrant journeyings, never to end till the wind makes its last gesture across the desert. And the stars—peeping between the fingered fronds of palms, and twinkling ever brightly, for all the even luster of the moon—bespeak the magic of the nebula, the primal swirl in the cycle of all life. And when the winds

of the desert will have made the last gesture, there will come a new wind, a new breath of life, the fiery life of the nebula; then so, perchance, the dust will rise refreshed from the serene enchantment of a moon-white night, to journey on again. . . .

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